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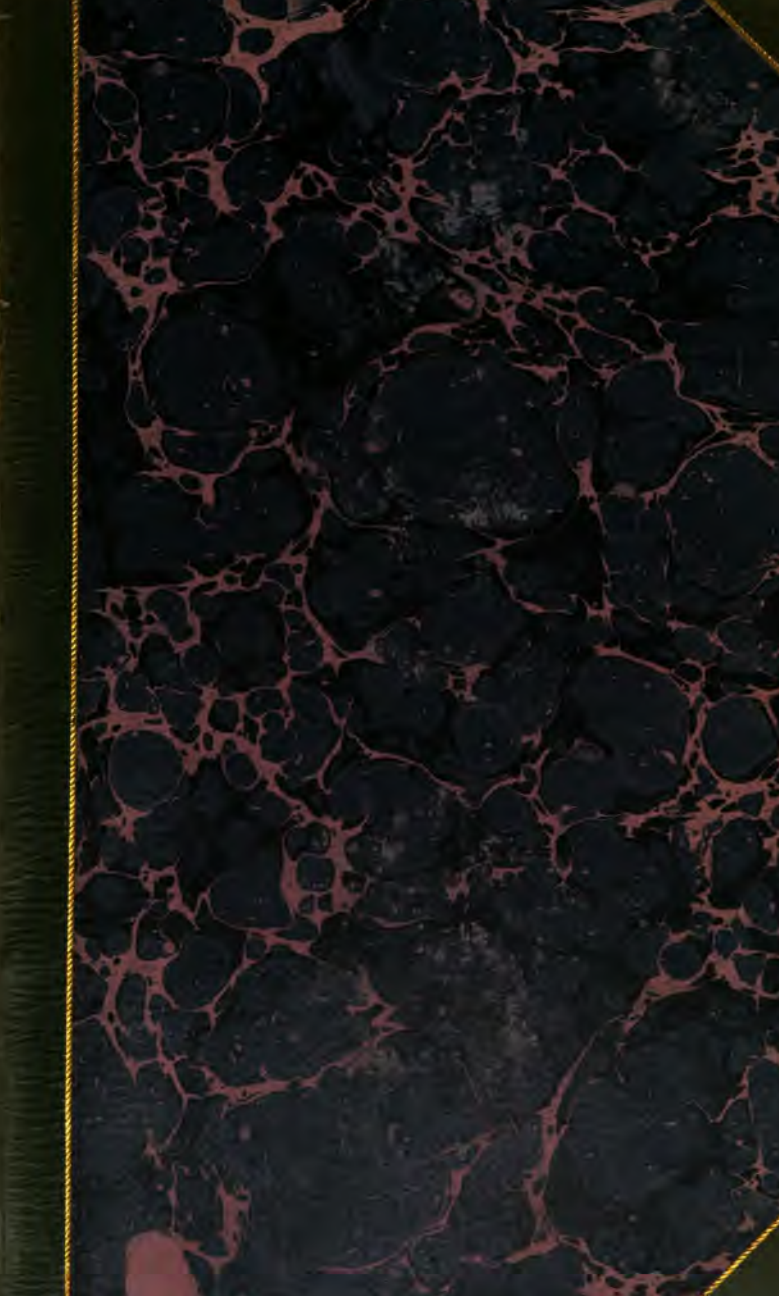
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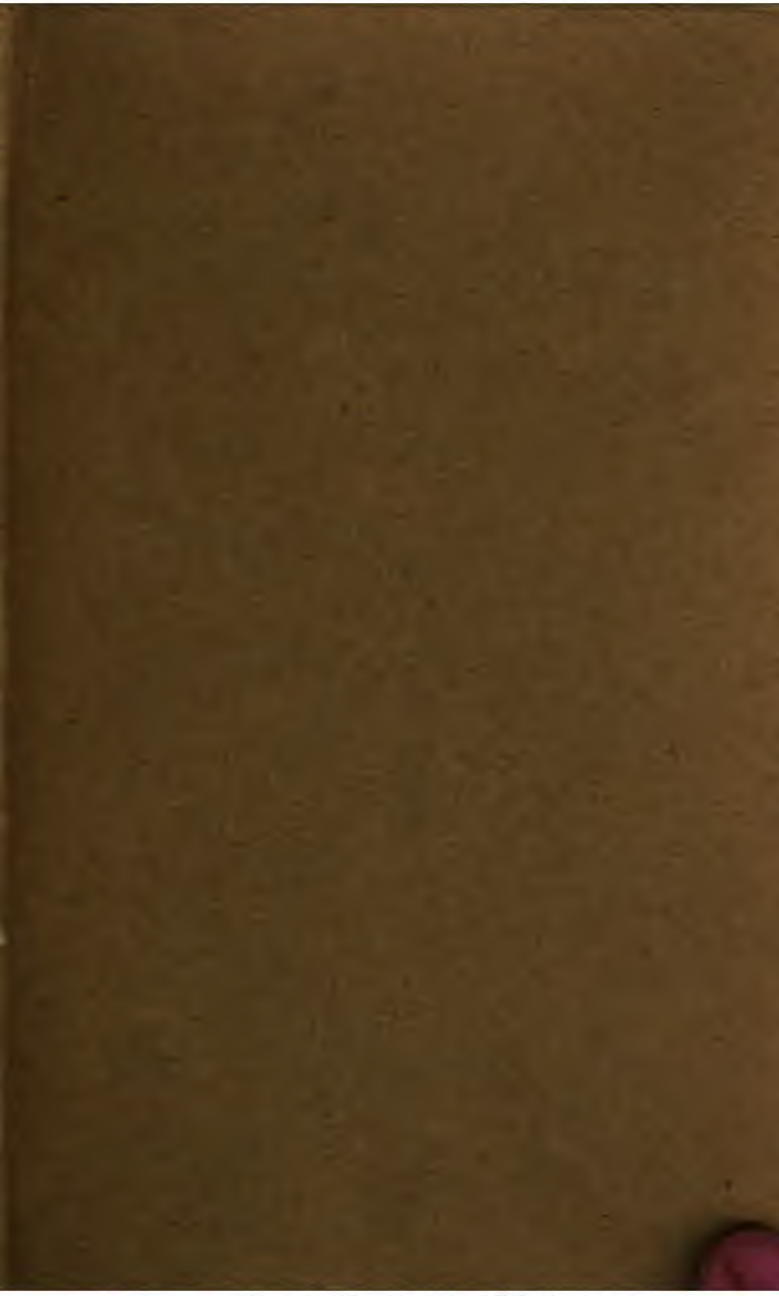
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William, Duke of Bedford,

Endsleigh.



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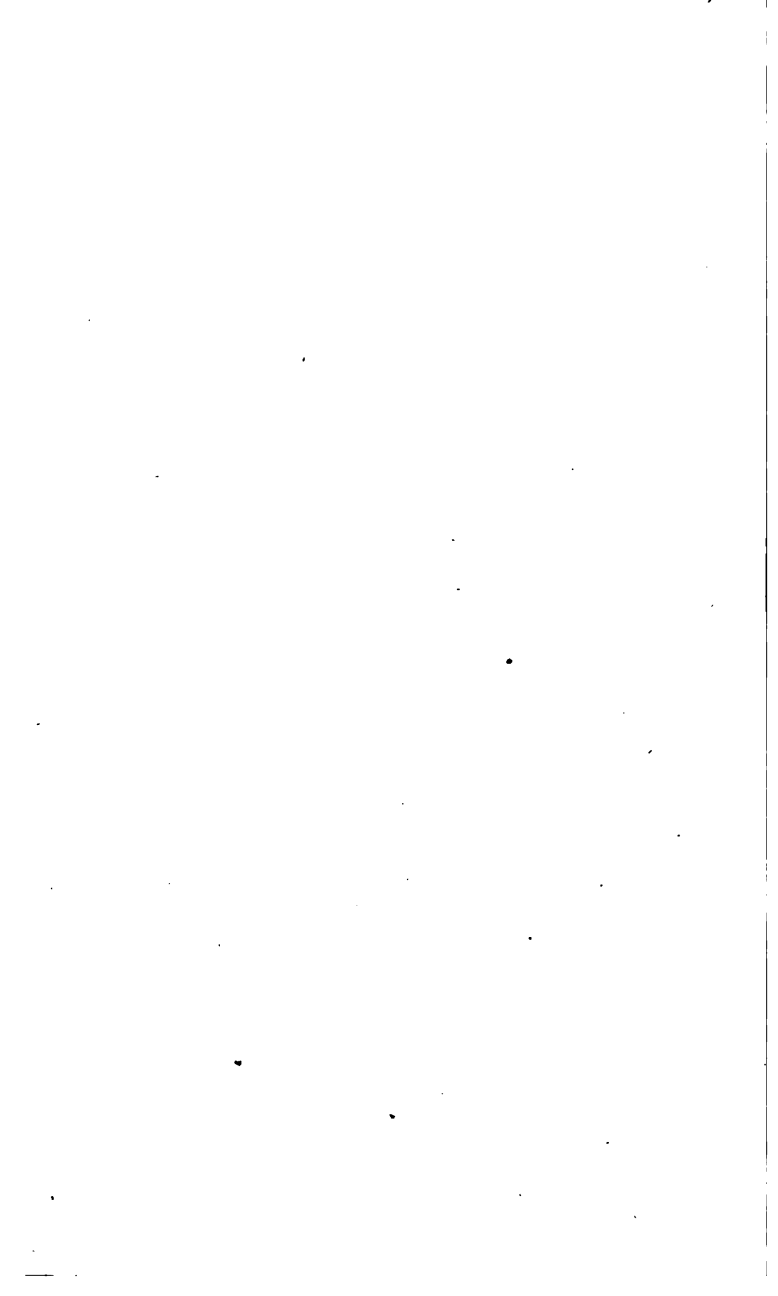
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# DI MONTRANZO.

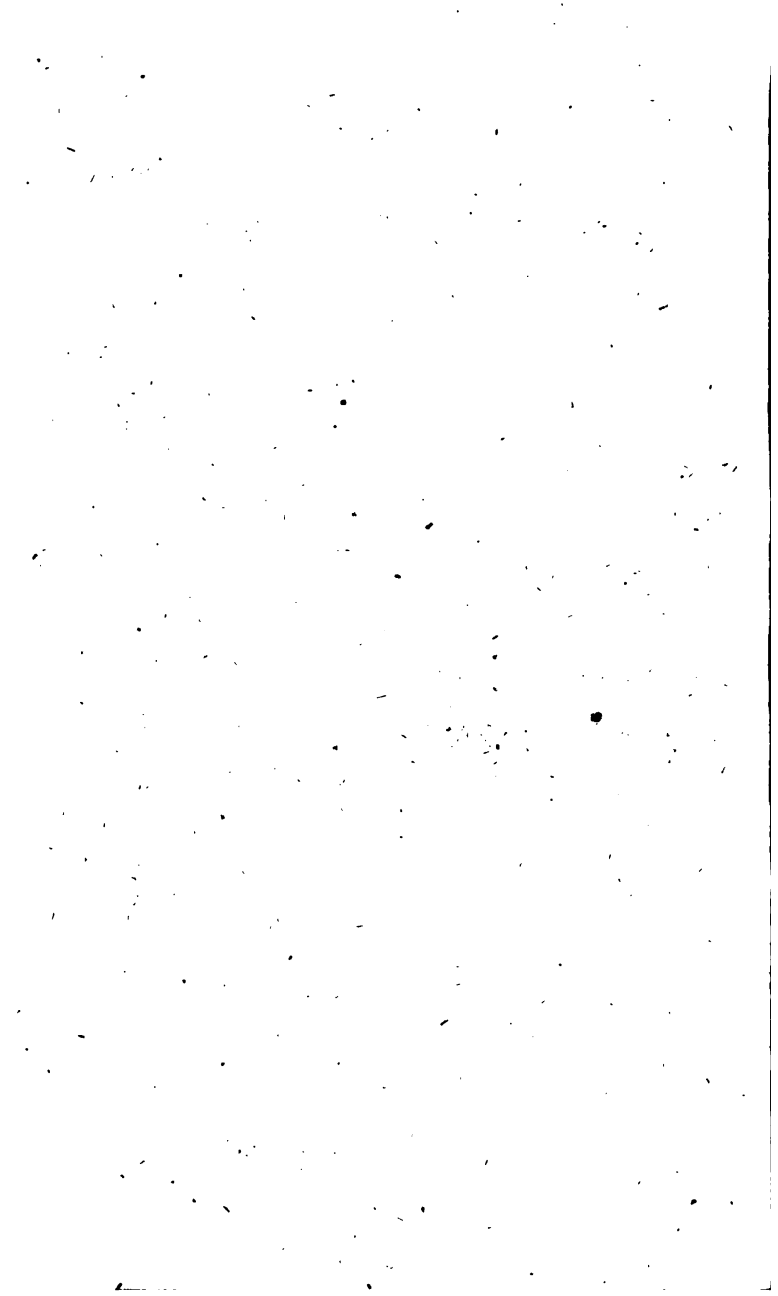
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A ROMANCE.

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Lanc, Darling, and Co. Leadenhall-Street.

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# DI MONTRANZO;

OR,

## THE NOVICE OF CORPUS DOMINI.

A Romance.

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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BY

LOUISA SIDNEY STANHOPE,

AUTHOR OF

MONTBRASIL ABBEY; THE BANDIT'S BRIDE; STRIKING  
LIKENESSES; THE AGE WE LIVE IN, &c. &c.

---

This is an act so newly horrid,  
So ghastly a contrivance of revenge,  
That fiends themselves would start at the proposal.

LEE.

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VOL. III.

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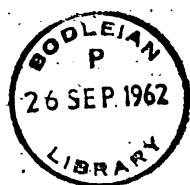
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# DI MONTRANZO.

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## CHAP. I.

Urge me no farther,  
But, like a friend, be willing not to know,  
What to reveal would give thy friend a pain.

Rowe.

— Oh, more than savage!  
Had they or hearts or eyes that did this deed?

Congreve.

**F**OUR months had marked the sojournment of Isidore at the Castle of Montranzo, and the influence which he had acquired over the mind of Di Rinaldini insensibly augmented: for him the gloomy habit of

VOL. III.                      B                      misanthropy

misanthropy was banished; for him the smile of cheerfulness was recalled; for him he struggled with the bitterness of remembrance, and summoned the powers of reason: if the tale of disappointed love pictured the adored object of his once glowing hopes, if it bathed his face in tears, or awakened the pang of misery, the expressions, the soothing remonstrances of the pilgrim, so sweet, so soft, that,

“ Like flakes of feather'd snow,  
They melted as they fell,”

failed not to allay the perturbed gusts of affliction, failed not to awaken piety, failed not to subdue the repining murmurs of discontent.

But, if Huberto regained peace, Isidore appeared to lose it; he never smiled, but when returning sadness clouded the brow of his host, and that smile was not the spontaneous effusion of youth, but the studied efforts of gaiety; sometimes, for  
whole

whole minutes, abstracted, wrapt within himself, he would sit, the motionless image of woe ; sometimes, starting, his eyes would fix on heaven, and his whole form tremble with the weighty import of his thoughts ; sometimes, shrinking into the solitude of his chamber, he would number his beads with the devotion of a penitent, or humbly prostrate, supplicate the throne of grace for fortitude and favour.

It was after witnessing one of these reveries, that Di Rinaldini, reflecting, with concern and wonder, on the change in the manners of his guest, stole softly from his apartment, and courted by the mellow radiance of a full moon, descended to the rampart. The night was unusually fine ; the air mild and refreshing ; and as the eye wandered over the rich expanse of scenery, a thousand shadows seemed to dance on the chequered bosom of the Appenines.— From the mystic gloom of Isidore, memory recurred to scenes of past bliss ; gradually



the fairy images of never-to-be-recovered blessings filled every idea, and the sweet shade of Adelheida seemed to hover over him, seemed to smile in all the wonted confidence of love and happiness. He hailed the beatific vision, he yielded to the delusion of his senses, months were obliterated from the annals of time, and the warm glow of youthful enthrallment was rekindled, was refelt. The harmony of Heaven's angels seemed to sanctify the enthusiasm, for the soft chords of a lute, touched with masterly expression, dissipated the stillness of reposing nature, and died on the breeze of night. Huberto, wrapt, entranced, reclined against a low arch, whose shadow veiled him from observation, his eyes instinctively resting on the turreted chamber of the pilgrim, and his heart throbbing with a sensation for which he could not account. Suddenly, the hand of the musician seemed to lose all power of exertion ; the tones were more thrilling, but less firm ; they trembled, they paused :  
again

again a faint vibration succeeded, and again all sank to silence. "Poor Isidore," he sighed, as he lingered in expectation of a repetition of the sound, "fate has awarded you sorrow, and Nature has given you a heart to feel." He heard the casement softly open; he looked up and beheld the youth; his countenance was pale; his eyes were suffused in tears; his head was uncovered, and his dark hair, floating on his polished forehead, gave to his features a touching expression of interest.

"Mysterious Heaven!" he aspired, "for what secret end am I created? by what secret spell has destiny led me to a retreat which swallows up every joy? ah! whither are fled the youthful wishes of inexperience? whither the vain subterfuge of fallacious hope? my soul, the weak, the yielding slave of sentiment, shrinks in the conflict: to fly—is that my only remaining chance of peace? ah, no! the effort comes too late; to fly, and whither? to fly  
B 3 when

when my presence gives comfort ! no, no," with shuddering horror, " Di Rinaldini, my strength is exhausted, I can struggle no longer ; on earth, repose never more can be mine ; never, never ; shrouded in death, my story and my woes will be remembered, will be—" and a fresh burst of tears smothered the concluding sentence.

Huberto pined to speak consolation, pined to press the mourner to his bosom, to sooth him in the language of friendship ; yet he dared not intrude on the secret indulgence of sorrow ; he dared not emerge from the arch which concealed him from observation. Distinctly he heard the sobs of the youth ; distinctly he caught the murmur of his own name, and traced the anguished look which was directed towards Heaven. Again the instrument breathed the sweetest concord, breathed a sympathetic air to the feelings of the musician ; it was an adagio of the most plaintive kind, the words an address to sensibility. The  
voice

voice faltered in the first stanza—it died away—it ceased—the lute dropped from the nerveless hand of the pilgrim. “Baleful, baleful passion !” he exclaimed, “parent alike of bliss and woe, purloiner of the soul’s repose, treacherous betrayer of the heart’s secret—of bliss—no, for that is transient and evanescent—bliss, as the shadow, vanishes in the grasp, but woe dost thou perpetuate, for woe is deep and corroding.”

“It must be love,” thought Di Rinaldini, as the casement closed, and Isidore retreated ; “what else than love can instigate a conduct so extraordinary, a despondence so unconquerable ? ah ! surely he is too ingenuous to breathe deceit : Is Hemelfride indeed his sister ? or, unhappy lover, perhaps a fate as irremediable as my own withholds the secret, and forbids the reciprocity of confidence. To-morrow I will dissolve every imagined tie of obligation ; to-morrow, although the peace I have recovered be wrecked in the renun-

B 4

ciation,

ciation, you shall be at liberty to seek that happiness your generous friendship, your enthusiastic gratitude has destroyed ; yes, to-morrow," and his heart sunk in the decision, "to-morrow, poor youth, however painful the effort, I will bid you depart."

Desponding he returned to his chamber; the beauty of the night, the calm splendour of nature's sublimest bulwarks, slumbering in the immensity of space, inspired not, as heretofore, a resignation which could rob thought of a pang ; his mind even shrunk from a revisal of former hours, and rested solely on the mysterious sorrows of his interesting guest. "Ah! can I part with you," he would exclaim, starting from a fevered dream, in which the last lingering adieu of Isidore sounded in mournful cadence on his ear ; "can I part with you, and for ever ? can I sever the intercourse of hearts, beating with a lively interest for each other ? Merciful Heaven ! why is Isidore so strangely necessary to my peace ?  
why

why does my sickly fancy picture no other reliance ? is it to his knowledge, is it to his virtues that he owes this influence ? is it from tenderness, is it from pity, that I have lost all power over myself ? In vain he essayed to dissipate the uneasiness of his mind ; in vain he invoked indifference ; he struggled for calmness ; in spite of every effort, his spirits drooped desponding ; his heart whispered—with Isidore will vanish every vestige of comfort.

In the morning, the languid paleness of the pilgrim revived his resolution. He watched the departure of Vannina, and then, with hurried quickness, demanded whether the barrier of mystery was ever to be withheld ? The youth looked inquisitively towards him. “ The bloom of health has fled your cheek,” continued Huberto ; “ the smothered sadness of sorrow pervades your features, and your bosom in vain struggles with the bursting sigh ; Tell me, Isidore, is the vow irrevocable

that seals your story? will you indeed depart, without confiding its recital to a being too prepossessed to condemn, too fallible to censure?"

"Depart!" articulated the pilgrim; "depart! ah! would to Heaven I could!"

"You can, you shall," exclaimed Di Rinaldini, in all the ardour of compassion: "The gate now is open, your passage is free—"

"To eternity," whispered Isidore, "for what other passage can point to freedom?"

Huberto looked fearfully towards him.

"I thought," pursued the youth, forcing a smile, "Montranzo was the resting-place of all my troubles: do you retract the benefice once held forth? am I again a wanderer? have I again to seek a home?"

"No, never," fervently replied Di Rinaldini, "while I possess one: and yet," with a faltering irresolution, as if he dreaded to wound, "why should the claim of  
6 friendship,

friendship, why should the generous disinterestedness of regard, chain you to a spot which militates against your bosom's peace? Nay, start not, Isidore; your feelings, your struggles, your sufferings, have been long witnessed, have been long deplored. When first I conducted you to Montranzo, I beheld a shade of care, a timid apprehension overspread your features; that shade of care, that timid apprehension, gradually gave place to placid submission, and contented security. Now mark the third succession: despondency the most irremediable, despair the most profound, saps every faculty of your all-intelligent mind, and leaves me at a loss to guess the fatal source of evil: you was cheerful, you was happy; you robbed my soul of its bitterest pangs, you insensibly infused into my breast the warm enthusiasm which animated your own; you taught me resignation to Heaven's decree; you taught me to hope, even in this world, for contentment: now you



shun me, now you turn pale at my approach ; you fly to solitude, as though to a cloak from woe, and when in solitude, pour forth the most bitter sorrows, the most heart-rending complaints. Last night, the moon's bright beams attracted me to the rampart ; when there, the harmony of your lute detained me ; I heard you, in the softest, sweetest tones, warble an air to sensibility ; but too much the slave to feeling, you paused in the first stanza, and apostrophized that passion, in accents more than usually impressive—I saw you weep ; I heard you talk of flight.”

“ Merciful Father !” interrupted the agonized youth, “ what else ? say, what else did you hear ?”

“ I heard,” replied Di Rinaldini, “ what my heart mourns in repeating ; I heard you say, ‘ On earth, repose never more could be your’s.’”

Isidore, sobbing, hid his face in his hands.

“ I heard

"I heard you say, shrouded in death, your story and your woes would be remembered. Unhappy boy!"

The pilgrim looked with exulting confidence towards him.

"Is your fate so hopeless?" he continued: "is death your only passport to peace? say, has the tale been framed by necessity, or has persecution—confess at once the disguise."

He paused, for again the head of the pilgrim drooped upon his bosom, and his short quick breathing betrayed the agitation of his feelings. Huberto flew to his assistance; he threw his arm around him; he raised his hand to unbutton his vest, but with momentary strength, the pilgrim evaded the attempt, and tottering a few paces, reclined against the wall. His cheeks were flushed to the deepest crimson, and his eyes, as though unable to encounter the  
glance

glance of his host, were bent upon the floor. Again Di Rinaldini approached; again he took the hand of the agitated youth. "Isidore," he implored, "for pity's sake, be composed: alas! how am I to act? what am I to guess from a trepidation so unusual?"

"Ah! spare me," faltered the youth. "Huberto, I dare not look up; condemn me not unheard."

"Condemn you! no, my friend, I pity, I cannot condemn."

"Then you know my story," eagerly rejoined Isidore; "you know the sorrows, the dangers I have encountered, but you know not the feelings which braved those dangers, you know not the motive."

"I possess no knowledge," interrupted Di Rinaldini; "I only guess that Hemelfride boasts a nearer, a dearer claim, than sister."

"Hemelfride!" ejaculated the youth, and a bright expression of joy chased away the burning blush of confusion.

"Perhaps,

"Perhaps, ere now, she reproaches the tardiness of her lover," pursued Huberto; "perhaps, pining at his absence, she suspects his truth, she doubts his affection; perhaps her hours are marked by restless anxiety and corroding care: go, and terminate that anxiety; go, follow the impulse of your heart, and from the tender duties of domestic life, from the warm tie of reciprocal affection, snatch the fleeting moments of bliss."

"'Tis true," murmured the youth; "the woes of Hemelfride are the woes of the heart; 'tis true, with enthusiastic adoration she beholds one—one, alas! who cannot return her tenderness."

"Unhappy maid!" sighed Di Rinaldini.

"But it is not the name of Isidore which hangs upon her lips," he mournfully continued; "oh, no! it is not the image of Isidore which reigns tyrannic in her bosom, which tinges every sigh, which poisons every expectation, which murders every earthly chance of peace."

"Does

“ Does the fatal despoiler know the havock he has made ?” asked Huberto.

“ No,” replied the pilgrim ; “ robbed of every enjoyment, she yet preserves the secret.”

“ Save to the ear of her brother,” observed Di Rinaldini.

“ Yes, to me,” rejoined Isidore, “ Hemelfride has acknowledged all.”

“ Then Hemelfride, *the novice of Corpus Domini*, is indeed your sister ?”

“ I have said so ;” and again he hid his face in his bosom.

“ True, you have said so,” repeated Huberto ; after a short interval of reflection, “ you have also said, the being, upon whom such a world of tenderness is lavished, knows not the feelings he has inspired ; perhaps, could he guess those feelings, compassion, guised in the semblance of love, might—”

“ *Compassion !*” proudly interrupted the youth ; “ Hemelfride’s soul would, has spurned the offering of compassion ; her’s  
are

are no common feelings, her's are the spontaneous effusions of grateful virtue, tinged by the softer sympathies of the heart; her's are no interested, no sordid motives; self mingles not with her ideas; no, for the being her enthusiastic soul has stamped with the die of every great, of every emulous quality, she would brave every persecution, misery, death; she would brave every peril which could menace, which could overwhelm her; to give him peace, she would—ah! what would she not endure!”

“ Heroic girl !” exclaimed Di Rinaldini.

“ But mark where her heroism ends,” pursued Isidore; “ alas! with the empire of pride does it expire. If the life of—” he paused, he trembled; “ pride”—hesitating, “ in the presence of—in the presence of her enslaver,” deeply blushing, “ snatches the rein from sensibility, and instigates a conduct feeling mourns; but in solitude, divested of the necessity for exertion, she droops, she deplores, she weeps the sacrifice

flee made at a shrine where every impulse of nature is immolated."

"How, in a convent's gloom, could such feelings, such magnanimity gain entrance?" questioned the sympathizing Huberto; "or rather, how could the unconscious being, who awakened those feelings, who gave colour to that magnanimity, steal upon her orisons?"

"Hemelfride fled her convent," said the pilgrim, "and chance, which sometimes constitutes the happiness, sometimes the misery of individuals, presented him, armed with a plea her sensibility was but too ill calculated to resist. Little dreaming of danger, she cherished the lurking purloiner, Love, beneath a sentiment far different; nor struggled with her heart's rival, till every effort of resistance became futile. Ah! think what were her feelings, when, "like the dissolving visions of a blissful dream," her delirium ceased; when, awakening, she descried the fearful brink of that abyss o'er which she tottered; when  
seas

seas of bitter tears extinguished not the burning flame in her bosom ; when reason and conviction whispered, *Hemelfride is a slave for ever* ; ah ! think, when every ray of fallacious hope vanished, what must have been the prospect of a fate so lost, of a life so clouded ! the world may condemn, because it is wily, because judging by its own depravity, it dives not into the soul's secrets ; but innocence breathed not a sigh unhallowed—breathed not a sigh which could have dyed the cheek of Hemelfride with the blush of shame : you too may blame, you too may—”

“ Am I wily ? am I to judge by the criterion of depravity ? ” interrupted Di Rinaldini.

“ You—you—Signor ? oh ! no ; when I picture honour, then is it your image I would sketch ; when I picture virtue, I would animate her with your mind ; nay, every line should borrow from your outward form, grace—from your inward soul, pre-eminence.”

“ I would



"I would fain believe you spoke the sentiments of your heart, my young friend, did I not feel a consciousness of my own unworthiness; and yet," continued Di Rinaldini, smiling at the compliment, "I am loath to call flatterer, a being I so highly prize."

"Surely flattery is one of the world's *forts*," archly observed Isidore. "When I entered Montranzo, I knew it but by name; if already I am become an adept, I must have gained my knowledge here."

"I will not style it flattery, but mistaken partiality then," rejoined Huberto, "which, by magnifying my small claims to merit, blinds your eyes to the extensive list of my errors."

"Errors! ah that my heart could indeed think so!"

Huberto heard not the conclusion, for it was pronounced in a kind of stifled voice, and the entrance of Vannina checked a renewal of the subject.

"Signor,"

"Signor," she exclaimed, holding forth a small ivory casket, "see what I have found."

Di Rinaldini started, for instantly he recognised the casket, which contained the heart he once excited the displeasure of the Conte Alverani by examining. "Found! where? when?" he hastily demanded, and an unknown agitation palsied the hand extended to receive it."

"Holy St. Rosalia, how you tremble!" said Vannina, disregarding the enquiry; "and you, Isidore, why, your cheeks are as pale as the Signor's."

"Mine, Vannina!" murmured the youth, and again his eyes turned on Huberto.—Tears could no longer be withheld, for, in that glance, he traced in the features of his friend an expression of the deepest sorrow, of the most anguished regret: "Mother of God!" he ejaculated, with an involuntary impulse springing to the side of Huberto, "what has this fatal casket awakened?"

awakened? Suffer me, I implore you, suffer me to take it, to hide it from your sight for ever."

"No, Isidore; leave me," shuddering;  
"I would know its contents; I would—"

"Leave you!" interrupted the pilgrim, alas! I cannot leave you thus: you know not what you ask, Huberto; my heart cannot bear your suffering; I would spare you every unnecessary effort: yes, if a pang must be endured, 'tis I would claim it."

"Generous friend! your tenderness afflicts me: since I lost my Adelheida," and his voice faltered, "I have not been accustomed to attentions so soothing."

Isidore turned aside his head, as mournfully he articulated, "I—I afflict you!—blessed Mary! you gave me an asylum, and I afflict!"

The melancholy despondency of his voice struck the heart of Di Rinaldini; he dropped the casket on the table; he followed him to the door. "Isidore, my too sensitive

sensitive friend," he exclaimed, snatching his hand, and fervently pressing it, "pardon an inaccuracy of expression, which gained birth in wounded feeling, which escaped the lips, but proceeded not from the heart."

The youth could not speak; he bowed his head in token of acknowledgment, smothered his sobs in his handkerchief, and fled from the apartment.

"Poor Isidore!" exclaimed Vannina, forgetful of the presence of Huberto, "what a pity such beautiful eyes should be spoiled by weeping! I declare I wish I had thrown the frightful hideous casket into the Metremo."

"Vannina!" said Di Rinaldini.

She blushed, she started, and turned in confusion to the window,

"Vannina," again repeated our hero,  
"tell

tell me where you discovered this casket ?  
tell me whether curiosity has tempted you  
to open it, to examine its contents ?”

“ No, Signor, by my hopes of pardon, I  
know but the outside : had I wished it, I  
could not have opened it ; see, it is locked,  
and I sought in vain for the key.

“ But where did you find it ?” interro-  
gated Huberto.

“ In my Lord the Conte’s library : I  
went there for—for—”

“ For what, Vannina ?”

“ I went only for a book, Signor.”

“ A book !” he repeated ; “ how in  
search of a book could you discover this  
casket ?”

“ I wished,” hesitating, “ I wished to  
surprise Isidore with something new : he is  
very fond of reading, Signor, and passes  
more than half his time with his music and  
his studies. I remember the holy superior  
of Corpus Domini used to say, reading was  
a relief to the mind ; I am sure Isidore  
must find it so, for I mistake much if it  
does

does not cheat many and many a reflection of its bitterness: and there's his drawings; oh! Signor, did you ever see his drawings? they are so beautiful! and your own picture is so exact, so the very image of yourself, that I could almost have spoken to it."

"My own picture!" repeated Huberto,

"Yes," rejoined the loquacious Vannina; "but Isidore knows not that I have seen it; it is in a portfolio under the head of his bed: would you like to see it, Signor?"

"Not clandestinely," replied Di Rinaldini. "But the casket, Vannina, tell me where you found the casket?"

"Oh, Signor! it was on the very top shelf in the library, hid behind a large book, as if it was never to come down; I dare swear my Lord the Conte put it there in a hurry, and forgot it."

"No matter: leave me, Vannina, I wish to be alone.—Whence proceeds this emotion?" thought Di Rinaldini, as his trembling hand grasped the casket: "merciful

Heaven ! why should an incident so trivial in itself excite both pain and apprehension ?” He attentively examined it ; it was of finely wrought ivory inlaid with gold : he attempted to raise the lid, but it was secure ; he thought to force it, but his heart seemed to condemn the effort : “ I will go to St. Romuald,” he exclaimed, “ and in the presence of my friend, my preceptor, examine the contents.”

The plan was scarcely formed ere executed : immediately he quitted Montranzo, nor paused till he reached the cell of Father Luitfrido. The gratulations at meeting passed, Huberto put the casket into the hands of the canon, and acquainted him by what means it had come into his possession, requesting his advice relative to the propriety of breaking the lock.

“ There can be no hesitation required,” replied Father Luitfrido, “ when attending circumstances are considered. The contents

tents of this casket may possibly throw some light on the mysterious absence of the Conte Alverani; and honour, my esteemed young friend, stands acquitted of reflection, for necessity warrants what delicacy might otherwise condemn."

"Do you, father, break the seal," said Di Rinaldini.

"Heaven knows it is not from curiosity," said the canon, "but from a motive of good, that thus I act;" and with a sudden wrench, he lifted the lid of the casket; but instantly, as though a basilisk had sprung to view, did it drop from his nerveless fingers. "God of omnipotence!" he aspirated.

Huberto started; and from the casket, his eyes were raised in expectant horror to the ashy countenance of his friend.

Again, with revived firmness, the canon raised the lid, and drew forth a heart, the counterpart of the one which Huberto had



once seen suspended around his own neck. It was incrustated with diamonds, encircling a braiding of hair. The canon noticed not the splendour of the gems, but eagerly touching a secret spring, it flew open, and the portrait of a gentleman, in the meridian blaze of manly beauty, with all the mild philanthropy of the soul depicted in the speaking lineaments, was revealed to view. Gasping for breath, the canon pressed his hand upon his forehead, as his quivering lips articulated, "What am I to suspect? what am I to learn? look at this image, my son; behold it well; as this is, so once was the Marchese di Montranzo; once, yes, once was he supremely blest, once was he happy, once did he know no wish ungratified; but now—" shuddering, he paused; "yet," wildly, "as I hold this painted shadow, the words of Di Monte Melissario recur to memory; they awaken, holy Heaven, what do they not awaken! Huberto, Huberto, you are like this picture; you are—"

"What?

"What? who?" eagerly questioned Di Rinaldini. "Ah! speak, my friend, my preceptor; hid me not from myself."

"Alas! I know not," faintly concluded Father Luitfrido; and closing the spring, he burst into tears.

"Let us search further," implored the agitated Huberto; "in mercy let us develop the contents of this mysterious casket."

"Spare me," murmured the canon, his labouring bosom swelling with a heavy sigh; "alas! my bleeding heart can bear no additional trial."

"To-morrow, then," said his companion, willing to sacrifice his own feelings to the peace of his friend.

"To-morrow!" exclaimed the canon; "blessed Virgin, to-morrow! what, breathe a long, long night in suspense! wear away the tedious hours in unavailing conjecture! oh! no, no;" and snatching, he tore open a fold of papers, irregularly squeezed into the casket.

*FRAGMENT THE FIRST.*

“ What have you to fear ? what is it you write ? Start at a shadow ! fie, fie, Alverani, it had not wont to be so : I tell you, your pusillanimity will ruin all : you will not receive him ; you will have nothing to do in the business ; you will sacrifice interest to principle ! pitiful, unworthy inference of a soul once prone to courage, once nerved by fortitude ! mistaken effort of false humanity, to lighten your own conscience, to silence the officious dogmas of meddling faith, you yield the gilded prize of greatness, you plunge my soul into a gulph so black, as to far exceed the utmost limitation of mercy, to baffle the promised stretch of redemption : yes, you doom me to murder.”

The paper dropped from the hand of Father Luitfrido ; he pointed to it, hastily articulated, “ Read, read,” and hiding his face in his cowl, in dread impatience listened to the conclusion.

“ I repeat

“ I repeat it, and on you be the blood I shed : I have sworn, by the grave of my hopes, that the happiness of my rival shall be blasted ; and may the racks of hell seize me if I keep not my oath ! Alverani, you know me ; why tamper with a resolution firm as fate ? you talk of mercy ; do you then be merciful ; 'tis from you the stream of mercy must flow ; for, but for you, the throat of innocence will be offered up a sacrifice to vengeance. . . . . ; . . . . .  
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*FRAGMENT THE SECOND.*

“ Weak man, the attempt cannot fail ; your letter breathes nought but reluctance and fear, and yet I stand unmoved. I tell you, I have made various observations ; my diligence never slumbers, and every thing conspires to fan my hopes : Disguised, unknown, unsuspected, have I haunted the roads of Montranzo, have I marked the hour and the moment fittest for action.”

"God of mercy!" ejaculated the canon; "of Montranzo!" and gasping, breathless, his eyes stedfastly rested on Di Rinaldini.

Alarmed at the unusual agitation of his friend, Huberto paused; he would have spoken comfort, composure, but Father Luitfrido, reading his intention, entreated him to continue. "'Tis true, I am weak, very weak," he murmured; "'tis true, my heart grievously palpitates; but suspense is a rack I cannot endure: let me know the arm which guided the dagger, and then—" he hesitated, "then," raising his eyes with an expression of mingled agony and resignation, "religion will be my refuge; it has comforted me ere now; it has been my stay, my safeguard; it has blunted the edge of distraction; it has turned aside the aim of self-violence. Proceed, my son; do not fear me; my fortitude surpasses even my feelings."

"In the cool of evening," Di Rinaldini  
continued

continued to read, " the deed can be perpetrated, and hours will intervene ere the theft is discovered. Shall it be stratagem, or shall it be violence ? no matter which, each alike being certain : if stratagem, 'tis but to flatter the vanity of a woman ; no more ; 'tis but to whisper love, and the business is done : if violence, the dagger, and the assistance of Ruffino . . . . .  
 . . . . .

" Ruffino !" groaned Father Luitfrido ;  
 " alas ! then there could be no mercy.—  
 Go on," shuddering, " though I die, yet would I hear the horrid story."

" The paper is torn," said Huberto.  
 " Dreadful break !" faltered the canon ;  
 " torn, and the dagger in the hand of Ruffino ! Oh ! hapless, lost victim ! but the remainder ; in pity decypher the remainder."

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*FRAGMENT THE THIRD.*

" I acknowledge, friendship for you is but  
 c 5. a secondary.

a secondary consideration ; revenge is the first. Last night, malice, hatred, envy, burned like a firebrand in my tortured heart ; every fibre was distended, and I swore by created nature, by the glory of the blessed, by the pangs of the damned, to live but for vengeance : yes, powers of unknown destiny, grant me life to poison the joy of my rival, and then do with me as you please. I could have loved, I have loved, I do love, with an ardour not to be controuled ; that love was rejected ; that rejection colours my every action. For what do I exist, but to stamp the curse of indignation, but to wield the barbed arrow of hatred, but to mock the sufferings of one she dared to prefer ? for what do I exist, but to blast the felicity I cannot feel ? Last night, unperceived, I marked the propelling impulse of nature, the solicitude of maternal tenderness : I envied not the babe she caressed ; no, had he worn the semblance of his father, I could have snatched him from her arms, I could have immolated his being ;  
but

but wrapped in infancy and innocence, I—even I felt pity—I—even I shed tears: weak and unmanly influence! As I gazed on her angel face, the last faint lingering spark of compassion threatened to overthrow all preceding resolves, threatened to subvert my oath, to make my promises and my vows, my determinations and my schemes, nugatory. But my rival came; and the sunny face of creation vanished; my rival came, and maddening rage, chaotic vengeance, banished the softened sentiments of humanity. I saw the beauteous instigator of the mischief smile in his face, and hell was not hotter than my heart.— ‘Avaunt, unworthy, coward weakness, that would whisper pity!’ I could have exclaimed; ‘now and for ever, I tear you from my bosom:’ but policy kept a guard upon my tongue, and with silent caution I watched them. Did he—and in my presence—did he kiss the glowing lip of beauty? yes, he did more, he threw his arm around her waist, he folded her to his bosom, he



called her his wife, his soul's comfort, the mother of his darling infant ! Gods ! had I possessed the envied power of the basilisk, I would have struck him dead ; could I have guided the thunder of Omnipotence, I would have blasted him in the very sanctuary of his felicity : but the period of my triumph was not then arrived ; it shall, it will come ; yet will I bend her stubborn will, yet will I conquer her pride, yet will I subject her to my power ; and then, yes, then, though hell yawns wide to engulf the ravisher, then will I be master of her person" . . . . .

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*FRAGMENT THE FOURTH.*

"What a reluctant consent have you tendered, Alverani ! At length you deign to snatch the prize Fortune holds to your acceptance. But what a sea of morality, what a page of idle reflection had I to encounter, ere I reached the decision ! You feel an apprehension, you feel a consciousness

ness of error ; your heart reproaches you ; ere the die is cast, it points to the precipice, into which, you say, weakness and indecision will plunge you. Strange, infatuated man ! take for your cloak the plea of mercy ; think that you save a life, and turn aside the shaft of conscience ; but remember, when once embarked in an enterprise so profound, silence and secrecy must be observed, must be the ruling law of action ; no start of piety, no religious fanaticism must breathe the tale, for the hour which witnesses your apostacy, witnesses the darings of my revenge."

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*FRAGMENT THE FIFTH.*

" Still repining, still the victim of pusillanimous fear ! 'tis no matter, the deed is done, and you cannot recant ; the die is cast, and Fortune favoured the project. If still ungrateful for the riches I have lavished on you, if still a slave to the silly axioms of the world, if still scared by the bugbear conscience, turn headsmen and  
repent ;

repent ; nay, if that will not do, if Heaven be not pacified by prayer, then build a monastery, and bribe its mercy ; institute an order of penitents, and let their breviar-ies, their forbearance, and inflictions, purify your soul from sin, and absolve you from the pangs of purgatory."

"Wretch !" articulated the canon ; " profane, sacrilegious wretch !"

"The infant's blood flowed freely," continued to peruse Huberto ; "the disfigured remains were carefully conveyed from the wood, and the bier watered with parental tears: How many balmy sighs swelled the snow-white bosom of beauty ! how many bitter drops dimmed the lustre of her radiant eyes !"

"How many imprecations did cruelty extort !" burst from the lips of the nearly convulsed canon. "Ill-fated, hapless, murdered Flodoaldo ! sweet lost cherub of an  
angel

angel mother ! holy Heaven, how many pangs did thy fate awaken ! But proceed, my son—let me hear the heart whose rancour planned the deed.”

“ Strange inconsistent being that I am ! ” pursued Di Rinaldini : “ in the moment of triumph, what portends the gloomy despondency of my feelings ? Alas ! who will weep when I shall be no more ? who will sigh o’er my tomb, or brood, with lingering fondness, o’er my memory ? The enigma of my own heart is the last that I can solve : I thought their misery would have constituted my happiness ; but I find it otherwise : my soul still pants for bliss unpossessed, still cherishes the burning flame of envy, the deadly malice of revenge : remorse at best is but a coward’s virtue ; I’ll tear it hence, I’ll banish the mournful theme, lest, catching the spark of your timidity, I fall into reflection, I yield to pity.”

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“ Righteous

“Righteous Providence!” exclaimed Di Rinaldini, as he concluded the inspection of the papers, “what a scene of iniquity is here unfolded! my benefactor, the guardian of my youth, implicated in a project so foul, so infernal! Time has been, when the bare shadow of such an accusation would have roused all my faculties into action, would have awakened the indignant pride of honour, would have spurred me on to have substantiated his justification, or to have perished; but now—now, alas! I fear to exert the ability of power; I fear, lest every step should, by throwing new light on the subject, blazon forth his dishonour, and my own ingratitude. He was once the standard of my imitation; he is still the preserver of my helplessness, the parent of Adelheida.”

“Then no hope is left,” sighed Father Luitfrido, as though in conclusion to his own reflection. “The barbarians would not spare him; *his disfigured remains were removed from the wood; his*  
*blood*

*blood flowed freely.* Avenging Heaven! hast thou no thunder to wield over the head of sin? Alas!" and his eyes rested on the type of forgiveness, which, impending over his wretched mattress, stamped the resignation, the agony, the endurance of a crucified Saviour. "Pardon, Father, the weakness of humanity; pardon the imprecation: Piety and virtue, religion and thy example, point to forgiveness; turn then the heart of the murderer, and if he still lives, oh! lead him to some solitude, where, in penitence and prayer, his drooping spirit, penetrated with divine protection, may rekindle the hope of mercy."

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## CHAP. II.

Have I been deaf? am I that rock unmov'd,  
 Against whose root tears beat, and sighs are sent  
 In vain? Have I beheld thy sorrows calmly?  
 Oh! thou too rashly censur'st.

OTWAY.

.....

With ease such fond chimeras we pursue,  
 As fancy frames for fancy to pursue.

DRYDEN.

IN returning to Montranzo, Di Rinaldini mused on the contents of the casket. It was evident the Canon of St. Romuald knew more than he chose to reveal; but how his fate should be concerned in the fragments so newly discovered, was a mystery he felt unable to resolve. He had often suspected his friend interested in the sufferings

sufferings of the Marchese di Montranzo ; the agitation he had betrayed at the mention of the Duca di Monte Melissario, and the more than common interest he appeared ever to feel in the affliction of the Marchese, had given birth to the conclusion : he felt assured, that misfortune, not guilt, had driven him to the asylum of the Camaldoli convent ; nay, he would have staked existence, upon the purity and rectitude of a heart, whose every impulse breathed virtue and universal philanthropy ; his days evinced one unvaried series of good actions ; he devoted himself to the welfare of others ; his engagements and his sacrifices had but one aim, and that aim was the succour of the wretched ; prayer was not the labour, but the recompence of his life ; virtue was not the boast, but the guide of his conduct ; never had he closed his ear against the plaint of poignant sorrow—never resisted the calls of humanity ; no disgraceful caprice varied his beneficence, for his soul, formed of the softened mould which nature



ture calls *feeling*, which the world denominates *romance*, was alive ever to the sacred ties of duty and benevolence.

“Such is my preceptor,” thought Herberto; “and yet, a victim to smothered grief, he droops in premature age, for the best energies of his life have flowed in bitterness. Oh, destiny! how secret, how enigmatical are thy decisions! imperceptibly dost thou propel us on through years of woe, through ages of sorrow. Existence! Great God! what does existence offer to a heart bereaved—a heart, in which the sympathies of nature are stifled—a heart, in which the prospects of enjoyment are become barren!”

The shade of Adelheida, like the blue mist of ether, floated in the prospect.—“Once,” he apostrophized, memory softening at the illusion, “once two fond hearts were united; once extasy was mine; once this earth was heaven; once the purest, tenderest

tenderest vows sealed the chaste interviews of bliss : time, as in the spell-bound regions of enchantment, wore rapidly away ; nature's glowing affection transported me into an ideal Elysium, and tinged every feeling, every respiration, every effusion of soul, with the energy of delight : now the ghost of lost felicity haunts me, subdues the boast of reason, scoffs at patience, at resignation, at hope, and colours every sigh with desolation, every thought with anguish."

Such were his reflections, as he pursued the rapid course of the Metremo, as he gazed on its gurgling eddies, and watched waves, which, from time immemorial, had rolled unsubdued—waves once swelled by the ensanguined stream of slaughter, once strewn with the bodies of unheeded slain, once, and for ever, stamped upon the page of history, in recording the defeat of Asdrubal, the triumph of Claudius Nero, and Livius Salinator. Such are the passions of man, defying controul, turbulent and ungovernable,

governable, riding, as the air-blown bubble, in proud triumph on the wave of time, broken by the first straw of contention, and swallowed in the vortex of eternity.

As Di Rinaldini approached the castle, an inward sensation seemed to reproach the hopeless picture he had sketched, for as he looked up, he beheld the youthful Isidore, bending, like the genius of inspiration, over the side of the rampart: the light elegance of his form, the Parian whiteness of his forehead, the waving profusion of his ebon hair, the speaking radiance of his animated eyes, but, above all, the hectic glow, which seemed the spontaneous effusion of newly-awakened enthusiasm, gave to his features a charm the most alluring, to his station an appearance the most picturesque.

“ And for me,” thought Huberto, as softly he stole beneath the rampart, “ for me are the active scenes of life resigned ;  
for

for me is Isidore content to waste the warm energies of his mind in a solitude so obscure: Friendship, great sovereign balm to affliction's power, henceforth I hail thee; henceforth shalt thou dry the tear of remembrance, shalt thou chase the sorrows of ill-fated love."

Again he looked up, for his soundless steps, as lightly he pressed the grassy herbage, attracted not the attention of the youth; still gracefully recumbent, he seemed to float on ideal visions; he seemed lost in the exuberance of fancy, alive only to the impulse of sentiment.

"If, like thee," thought our hero, as he traced a hand of snowy whiteness, putting back a raven ringlet—"if like thee, ah! surely Hemelfride merits an undivided heart."

Doubtful was the sigh which succeeded; whether it was the involuntary swell of  
tenderness,

tenderness, we cannot determine; true it is, that he gazed upon the pilgrim, with an earnestness, an admiration not to be controlled; that the verdant beauties of creation were disregarded; that the past and the future were alike effaced from memory.

“Why is the bliss of others the bane of my existence?” articulated Isidore. (Huberto scarcely breathed.) “Why, merciful Providence! am I doomed to wander through this gloomy world, the slave of passion, the victim of grief? why are the charms of happiness denied my youth? why the sympathies of affection my ardour? why, like yon cypress which bends to the breeze, why cannot I yield to the ordination of Heaven? Oh! sainted Eusebia, prophetic friend! you analyzed the feelings of my heart, you foreboded its doom—sorrow.”

Rich in the imagined secret, Di Rinaldini flew towards the drawbridge; he paused

not till he reached the rampart, till he reached the side of the pilgrim.—“Not all the energies of life are blasted,” he exclaimed: “Isidore, this day has the mists of despair vanished; this day has the cordial warmth of friendship darted into my bosom, has it whispered future peace. Court you the heaven-born guest. Let our comfort flow from the same source. Friendship fills the aching void in my heart: be your’s as flexible.”

A half-suppressed shriek burst from the lips of the youth; he tottered, he trembled; the bloom fled his cheek; tears started to his eyes.

“Am I to my unexpected approach to attribute this agitation?” demanded Di Rinaldini; “or is it the sickly indulgence of fancy which enervates your mind even to woman’s weakness?”

“The mind boasts not always the same energies,” observed Isidore, recovering his

composure ; “ it is, as the body, liable to change ; it is often the slave of circumstances, it is often the sport of feeling.”

“ What circumstance can warrant the sacrifice of health ? ”

“ Ah ! is it you who ask me ? ”

Huberto shuddered. The youth snatched his hand ; he saw he had thrilled the chord of woe ; and, with a bitter smile, he concluded—“ Solitude is an indulgence the miserable will court.”

In an instant dissolved the shadowy fabric Huberto had erected : peace was crushed in the dissolution. He looked towards the chapel, where mouldered the form of Adelheida, and felt that friendship could not silence every warring passion of the soul ; for there is

“ An avarice in grief ;

And the wan eye of sorrow loves to gaze

Upon its secret hoard of treasur'd woes,

In pining solitude.”

Often

Often there, with gloomy eagerness, had he revised the days of happier years; often there, with a miser's caution, had he retraced the fleeting hours of bliss.

"My study was melancholy," pursued Isidore, unconscious of the increased dejection of his friend:—"I was marking the progress of time since the dawn of memory: I was contrasting the bitterness of orphaned infancy, to the sweet, the endearing solicitude of parental tenderness. I was thinking, had Heaven vouchsafed me a mother, my sharpest throes of anguish had been spared. How strong, how dear, how impulsive, are the ties of Nature! what a chain does she forge, to unite the claims of consanguinity! Alas! that chain extends not to me; I am out of the reach of its influence: the creature of illusion, I stand, as it were, alone in the creation."

"Alone!" interrupted Di Rinaldini.

"I speak of filial claims," faltered Isidore.



“And forget fraternal?” he demanded —“Alas, poor Hemelfride! Had I such a sister, had I such a being to love, my life would not seem destitute. Eager for her happiness, methinks I should forget my own sorrow. Oh! I would watch over her, with a feeling so tender, a sensation so new; I would hide her in my heart’s sanctuary, and cherish her as I would honour or virtue. You weep!—Pardon me, my friend. Think not I breathe reproach: it is to inadvertence, not to disregard of the blessing, I attribute the oversight.”

“You would hide her in your *heart’s sanctuary!*” repeated Isidore—“Merciful God! you would *cherish her, as you would honour or virtue!*”

“Yes,” rejoined Huberto; “she should be father—mother—all to me. With the lynx-eye of affection would I guard each avenue to her virgin heart, would I warn her against the fatal influence of love.”

“Against love?” eagerly questioned  
Isidore

Isidore—"Would you warn Hemelfride against love?"

"Why so fervent?" asked Di Rinaldini.

"Because," replied the youth, "I have heard that love is the master passion of nature; I have heard, that without love, creation is a blank, and life a burden."

"Say, rather, you have felt, for experience alone could colour a flame so tender."

The youth started.

"Love," continued Huberto, "in its first era, was to me a scene of bliss. I imbibed it, I cherished it, it became a part of my being; my enthusiasm conceived nothing beyond it; the sorrows of my childhood were forgotten; every trace of pain, every vestige of care, vanished; the idol of my soul's homage smiled, and every succeeding moment was consecrated to passion. But for the tasted felicity, for the fleeting vision of six happy months, what have I not for-

feited! I am young in life, but my vigour is fled, my destiny is irremediable: the resources in myself have failed; happiness is annihilated, and thought is distraction. It is such a picture as this I would sketch, it is such devastation as this I would bid a sister shun."

"And yet the aspect was once cloudless," said the pilgrim. "Could man unfold the page of fate, the blast of approaching calamity would kill every springing hope; he would droop in the midst of felicity, he would anticipate the bitterness of affliction, in the transient moments of sublunary joy. Mother of God! fatigue and sorrow would be his portion, misery and woe would o'ercloud his pilgrimage. The illusions of the heart, the fairy tints of imagination, would no longer yield serenity, would no longer boast a charm: dead to every joy, nature's simple emotion, designed alike for all, would be unfelt; and the boasted privilege of reason but a darkened speck in the span of existence."

"Most

"Most true," sighed Di Rinaldini.—  
"Ignorance is our sheet-anchor of bliss; we feel security in the moment of fate, and the threatening thunder, wielding overhead, crushes us, ere awake to danger. And yet man labours hard for knowledge; man would raise the veil of futurity, would peruse the page of destiny."

"Dissatisfied, and the creature of incertitude and change," observed Isidore, "the desires of man exceed ever the gifts of Omnipotence; he slights the present blessing, in a fresh-formed wish, and blasts the placidity of content, by the pinings of caprice. How mysterious are the hidden movements of the heart! Hemelfride might have made her own happiness, but she shunned the path of peace; she panted for bliss, and she has found woe."

"She is young," said Huberto, "and her woe is not irremediable."

"You too are young," eagerly rejoined the pilgrim; "and yet you yield to despondency."

"Death," mournfully sighed Di Rinaldini.

"Ah!" interrupting him, with upraised eyes and glowing cheeks, "had death effaced her image from his heart; had her name been the last lingering effort of his clay-cold lips; had she known herself beloved; had she felt the sweet intercourse of sentiment, the tender reciprocity of sympathy; had she floated on the light ether of expectation, and yielded to the delicious delirium of fancy; the fertile genius of grief might have tormented, but could not have upbraided her. In happier worlds, she might have pictured the reunion of divided souls; the ray of promised mercy might have shot into her widowed bosom, might have cheated the pang of misery, and dignified the plaint of sorrow."

"Was her fate decided ere she fled her convent?" inquired Huberto—"Had the charm of fascination stolen upon her senses, did

did it guide her steps, did it whisper freedom?"

"Oh no," timidly; "ere she fled her convent, ere she fled the sacrifices duty extorted, she knew not the vexations, the pains, the fears, the perplexities, which strew with thorns the path of life. Disgusted with the sameness, the dead calm, the perfect monotony of a monastic life, she formed the resolution to break the fetters of restraint, and fly to freedom. Glowing with social affection, refined by tenderness, uninfluenced by enthusiasm, she sought the world, and proved too late the error of her judgment."

"Then it is the disappointment of a too sanguine mind which constitutes her sadness," said Di Rinaldini: "she pictured the world a fairy land, and she finds it inhospitable and selfish."

"No," eagerly; "she finds it the seat of beneficence and generosity."

"Surely," rejoined Huberto, smiling at the ardour of the youth, "till now, Heaven

never formed two beings so mysterious, so inexplicable. I should like to see Hemelfride: methinks I could love her, for her similarity to yourself."

"You shall see her, Signor."

"But when? where?"

"You shall see her," answered Isidore, "when with safety she can quit her hiding-place."

"I trust I shall see her happy!" exclaimed Di Rinaldini. "Interest sometimes springs from the very ashes of hope, and kindles into being. Her fate, less pregnant with calamity than despondency pictures, may yet cheer her into gladness: she may live to be a mother, to hear the innocent pleadings of infancy; to tread the unruffled path of domestic life; she may live to form the minds of her offspring, to rear them up to virtue and to honour, to feel the chaste endearment of connubial love, and to smile at the infatuation which now threatens death to joy; for the mind

at peace with itself, may reflect on the past disappointments of youth without bitterness."

"A mother!" murmured Isidore, yielding to the romantic fervour of his ideas—"God of nature! Hemelfride become a mother! Hemelfride sooth the faint cry of helplessness, catch the first accents of grateful love, trace the early shoots of knowledge, promote the pure sports of playfulness! Hemelfride——" He paused.

"Conclude the picture," said Huberto, smiling; "a pencil like your's, Isidore, decks it in new-fraught charms."

But the youth heard him not; he seemed lost in the delusion of fancy; elevated by the spirit of enthusiasm, a speaking radiance danced in his eyes, a glowing colour animated his features.

"With such ideas, such sentiments," concluded Di Rinaldini, "the solitude of Montranzo must indeed seem barren."



The pilgrim started.

"It was of Hemelfride we were speaking," recovering himself; "we were picturing what might have been her life—Alas! how different to what it is!"

"What will be!" exclaimed Huberto.

"Never!" fervently—"May Heaven avert the horror of an union unallied to love!"

"Methinks you judge your sister by the strength of her expressions," observed Di Rinaldini; "you give no scope to the possibility of change."

"I judge her by my own heart," replied the youth—"my heart, which shudders at the devastation of such a sacrifice,"

"Judge her rather by the powers of your mind," rejoined his friend, "and tell me whether that could not conquer an unworthy prepossession?"

"Unworthy!" repeated Isidore—"Holy Mary! unworthy!" and with fearful trepidation, he again ceased.

"Surely

"Surely the being, who, unconcerned, excites the sigh of Hemelfride, who, unpitying, shuns the blushing ardour of ill-concealed love, merits to be termed unworthy."

"But he knows it not, he dreams it not," eagerly rejoined Isidore. "Hemelfride carefully smothered the flame, nor, for a moment, betrayed her weakness."

"Then is he blind indeed," said Huberto; "a heart, such as you have described your sister's, cannot veil its feelings."

From this period, a new character seemed to animate the soul of the pilgrim: his features were decked in the smile of cheerfulness, his lips breathed the light flights of gaiety, his lute no longer vibrated the thrill of woe, but echoed the sprightly measure of merriment. The delighted Vannina hailed the change with rapture; she dived not beneath the surface—she fancied the effort nature. Di Rinaldini also was deceived; but he experienced no satisfaction—

tion in the change ; with that inconsistency which ever attends on grief, he marked it with regret : it was inimical to his feelings—it seemed the death of sympathy. The gentle solicitude, the unguarded tenderness which once instigated every action, once marked every word of his guest, imperceptibly had gained upon his mind, imperceptibly had rivetted his attention, had interested his heart : to see that solicitude no more, to see that tenderness restrained, was a blow to pride, as well as affection—a blow which opened the wounds of past sorrows, which filled him with restless anxiety, which seemed again to isolate him from the world.—“ Father of Heaven !” he would articulate, as with a jealous eye he marked the sportive sallies of Isidore and Yannina—“ Father of Heaven ! the only being who could console me, no longer feels an interest in my fate !”

Little did he think, little did he suspect the violence which this conquest over himself

self had excited in the breast of Isidore ; little did he think, little did he suspect the cruel agitation which each moment threatened to overthrow his studied display of indifference.

It was late in the evening, long after the sun had set, long after its brilliant reflections were obscured by the blue mists of approaching darkness, that the pilgrim, exhausted by the exertion of personating a part he could not feel, opened the door of the oratory. A stranger to the light fancies, to the idle train of superstitious fears which ever assail the mind of ignorance, he sought alone the calm of solitude, the luxury of indulgence. He knew Vannina dared not penetrate this imagined scene of supernatural horror ; he felt he might there throw aside the painful mask of cheerfulness : spiritless, disappointed, he would have retreated ; but Huberto, who stood at the step of the altar, saw the impulse

pulse—"Stay, Isidore," he exclaimed; "if my presence is become a restraint, I go."

The youth closed the door in silence.

"Time has been," he continued, breathing a half-reproachful sigh, "when my haunts were courted, not shunned; when the sweet tear of sympathy was given to my sorrows, and the painful, pleasing efforts of interest and regard to my consolation. But now——"

"What now?" implored Isidore, with a start of mingled anguish and regret.

"Now," concluded Di Rinaldini, "fresh pursuits engage a heart I thought incapable of change; and the pang of neglect pierces with additional poignancy, because it was unexpected."

The shadows of night veiled from observation the varying countenance of the pilgrim, else might have been read a volume  
of

of expression : burning tears streamed from his eyes, as trembling he clung for support to the rail of the altar—"Blessed Virgin!" he articulated, "*neglect*——" And the violent perturbation of his feelings imposed silence.

"Even in this spot, sacred to love," Huberto continued, "the pang of wounded friendship penetrates. At war with memory, I strive to banish the unwelcome theme; but, alas! it will arise, and torment me with a perseverance altogether inexplicable."

"What theme?" demanded the agitated youth.—"Oh! tell me what I have said, what I have done, to warrant a reproach so unlooked-for? Signor, friend, preserver, torture not my heart, but tell me."

"Perhaps I am unjust," said Di Rinaldini, disarmed in an instant of every vestige of displeasure—"Caprice cannot harbour in a breast so pure, so untainted by the world: it is then from my own conduct I must attribute

tribute a change which has filled me with despondency."

"Your own conduct!" echoed the ardent Isidore—"oh, Signor! your own conduct is but too perfect; it is deeply, it is irreversibly——" Checking himself with bashful trepidation, he concluded—"Contrasted with such virtue, mine must appear too palpable."

"Wherefore, then," demanded Huberto, "for days, for weeks, have you so carefully shunned me? wherefore is the leading feature of your character changed?"

"Alas! I know not," faltered the youth.

"You know not!" he repeated; "and yet you wonder that I feel. Oh, Isidore!" laying his hand upon the arm of the pilgrim, "call to mind the change in your manners, call to mind your promises of faith, and answer my inquiry?"

"God of Heaven direct me," faltered the youth, after a long pause of reflection.

"You

"You have said that my friendship was dear to your heart," resumed Di Rinaldini,

"Dear!" interrupted Isidore—"oh, most dear! I am changed, but it is in appearance; my gratitude, my thoughts are the same; they can never, never vary: the globe itself may melt away, but my sentiments, my opinions, will remain the same.

—*Call to mind my promises of faith!*—yes, I remember all. My life is your's, not mine: you preserved it; you said it was necessary to your comfort, and I yielded it to your guidance. Mould me then as you please, tell me what I shall say, teach me what I shall do, and judge my friendship by my submission. I will follow your footsteps; no danger, no sacrifice shall daunt my courage; country, climate, occupation, all alike are indifferent. Call me your friend, Huberto, call me your friend, and when the dark, the eternal cloud of death, enveloping all nature, silences the feelings of my heart, then, and not till then, will  
...  
you



you know the irresistible necessity which impels me."

With astonishment, with wonder, with awe, with admiration, Di Rinaldini gazed upon the speaker—"Oh! may I never solve the mystery," he exclaimed, "if death alone can lift the veil!"

Energy, fortitude, enthusiasm, vanished with the moment. Isidore, unable to restrain his sobs, dropped the hand of his host, and rushed from the oratory.

"Look, Signor," said Vannina, as Huberto in the morning entered the library, "look what a beautiful portrait! I always thought religion's garb frightful; but even this novice veil can't disguise the charms of Hemelfride."

"Of Hemelfride!" repeated Di Rinaldini, involuntarily extending his hand.

"It can be no other," rejoined Vannina;

"for,

"for, see, she is habited as a *novice of Corpus Domini*. Besides, the likeness to Isidore; though, methinks, 'tis not so handsome; there isn't half the expression in the eyes, nor half the sweetness on the lips. Don't you think, Signor, Isidore has the most bewitching smile in the world?"

"I never beheld a countenance more lovely," said Huberto, regardless of the question, and stedfastly observing the portrait—"sure Heaven formed her a transcript of itself?"

"Do you think it as handsome as Isidore?" again questioned Vannina.

"So gentle, so feminine, so indicative of all the softened attributes of woman!" pursued Di Rinaldini. "Mysterious Heaven! and yet to languish in the pangs of hopeless love!—I should like to retain this picture," suddenly turning to Vannina—"How came it in your possession?"

"Not for the universe, Signor," implored the alarmed girl.—"I took it from the portfolio

portfolio of Isidore, while he was walking on the terrace."

"It was wrong," said Huberto; and yet, his hand relinquished not the portrait.

"Shall I put it back?" asked Vannina.

"Certainly—Yet, stay; I will speak to Isidore; I know he will grant it to my request."

"Ah! but he will know who was the purloiner," exclaimed Vannina, "and despise me for my curiosity. I don't think he possesses any himself; how then can he pardon it in others?"

"There certainly exists a surprising resemblance," observed Di Rinaldini, as again his eyes were rivetted on the perfect contour of features, which a novitiate veil, thrown gracefully back, seemed modestly to disclose.

"I have heard," remarked Vannina, "that twins may often pass for each other; but I am sure I could discover Isidore, I am sure I could pick him out of a thousand Hemelfrides."

"There

"There is a something in this little shadow," exclaimed our hero, "which excites more interest——"

"That," thought Vannina, "is opinion."

"To know Isidore, is to love him; to see Hemelfride, is to admire."

"You have never seen her, Signor."

"True; but her picture, I judge by her picture, Vannina. Isidore is no flatterer: if his sister resemble this sketch of affection, nature cannot produce a more finished work."

"Isidore has not drawn her picture though," observed Vannina, yielding for a moment to the dictates of envy.

"'Tis true the snowy bosom is the limitation," said Huberto; "but surely imagination dares not disgrace——."

"Signor," interrupted Vannina, "why don't you ask Isidore to bring her to the Castle?"

"To the Castle," he repeated; "why should I?"

"I do

"I do think," she continued, "we should all be happier."

"Happier!" echoed Di Rinaldini; "why should the presence of Hemelfride promote happiness?"

"She would cheer us all," replied the artless girl: "Isidore would be delighted to see his sister; and you, Signor, would cease to despair."

"Never!" vehemently.

"Oh yes! Hemelfride is so beautiful, and so good; so gentle, and so compassionate; 'tis possible—she—she—she might——" hesitating—"she will remind us of former days, Signor."

The miniature dropped upon the table; Huberto folded his arms, and sighed.

"Merciful God! will that bring happiness? can the contrast of what I was, of what I am, insure peace?"

"Not the contrast," rejoined Vannina,  
eager

eager to efface the expression of melancholy which her words had produced.—“In this world, every thing is liable to change: the very stars themselves are not stationary.”

“What would you infer, Vannina?”

“Nothing, Signor—but—but——”

“Take the portrait,” said Di Rinaldini, firmly, “and replace it in the portfolio.”

“Do you think it possible,” asked Vannina, taking it from the table, and again holding it to his view, “that such a beautiful girl, as this represents, can love with ardour, and not be loved in return?”

“Everything is possible,” exclaimed Huberto.

“Then,” with an arch smile, “you, Signor, may be happy.”

Intuitively Huberto retook the miniature: Vannina gazed steadfastly upon his face, and traced, instead of sorrow and inquietude, an animated glow upon his cheek,

and an unusual radiance in his eyes. At that instant, the door of the library was softly opened, and Isidore appeared before them.

Blushing, abashed, disconcerted, Vannina would gladly have shrunk from his presence: the conscious conviction of error palsied the warm feelings of her heart; and, because she merited reproof, she dreaded to hear him speak. But the youth perceived not her embarrassment, nay, scarcely perceived her presence. One glance betrayed the study of Di Rinaldini, and that glance faded the vermilion of his complexion, and extended a tremulous emotion to his whole frame.

“I am admiring the extreme beauty of your sister,” said Huberto; “to behold Isidore, is to behold Hemelfride.”

“We are twins,” murmured the pilgrim, and his eyes bent upon the floor.

“Ah! but not so alike as to pass for each

each other," exclaimed Vannina—"I told the Signor just now, my life on it, I could discover you."

The youth smiled; he ventured to look up; his composure returned.

"I know not," observed Di Rinaldimi, "whether to the dazzling whiteness of her complexion, to the melancholy languor of her eye, or to the pious interest of her attire, the fair Hemelfride is indebted for the pre-eminence; but I could almost fancy her a missionary from above, descending on the errand of universal beneficence."

"Your colouring is too highly wrought," said Isidore.

"Was Hemelfride present," rejoined Huberto, "you might think it flattery; as it is, my friend, conclude it opinion."

"When I quitted my chamber," doubtfully remarked Isidore, "that little per-  
formance



formance was in my portfolio : shall I confess my surprise in thus discovering it in your hand?"

"The appearance," replied Di Rinaldini, "certainly justifies the inquiry, though——"

"I am the aggressor," interrupted Vannina; "I stand self-condemned, for I it was who took it from the portfolio, and brought it to the Signor. Will you pardon me, Isidore, when I confess my curiosity urged me on, even against my conscience?"

"If you can pardon yourself, Vannina, you have nothing to fear from me."

The tone of solemnity in which these words were uttered filled with tears the eyes of the humbled girl.—"If I can pardon myself!" she repeated—"Jesu Maria! what shall I do to show my contrition?"

"In future," said Isidore, taking her hand, in forgiving gentleness, "let the knowledge of right conquer the incitements of curiosity; in future, Vannina, act

as

as though the world's eye beheld your conduct."

"In future, your words shall strengthen duty," she exclaimed, with emotion; "I will remember them ever, and, when hesitating, recover firmness through your example.—Yet," with returning cheerfulness, "may not some blame be attached to sex? Curiosity, they say, is inherent in woman."

"Had Isidore cast that imputation on the fairest of Nature's works," remarked Huberto, "you, Vannina, would have entered the lists to have proclaimed their justification."

"Well, be the error alone my own," she replied; "I will not seek palliation, in quoting the prejudice of opinion."

Vannina had scarcely quitted the library, when Di Rinaldini's wish to possess the portrait returned. He knew not in what words to demand it; yet he knew not how

to resist the desire. Faintly smiling, Isidore took it from the table. Huberto fancied him retreating, and eagerly solicited him to stay.—“Do you particularly value that portrait, Isidore?”

“Value it, Signor! it is only my own performance.”

“And as such,” observed his friend, “invaluable.”

“No, Signor, not to me.”

“It would be invaluable to me.”

“To you!” repeated the gratified youth.

“Yes,” said Di Rinaldini; “for in the head of Madona, I should cherish the likeness of my friend. Will you give me that picture? Not the sensitive delicacy of Hemelfride can be violated by the compliance, for fancy will deck you in her garb; and, when I gaze upon it, I shall alone remember Isidore.”

The youth trembled.

“Take

"Take it," he articulated; "and be assured, the heart of Hemelfride, grateful to the preserver of her brother, would feel no inquietude in knowing him the possessor of her resemblance."

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### CHAP. III.

Now it is the time of night,  
That the graves, all gaping wide,  
Every one lets forth his sprite,  
In the church-way path to glide.

SHAKESPEARE.

VANNINA met Benevento as she retreated from the library. Humbled by the conviction of merited reproof, she looked not with the wonted superiority of ungracious pride ; but even smiled, as the page, pausing, checked her progress. Love sighed to warm the heart of Isidore ; but vanity pictured triumph in the persevering ardour of Benevento. Until the arrival of the pilgrim

pilgrim at Montranzo, he had no cause for fear: she had interpreted his glances, she had echoed back his sighs, nay, she had suffered him to talk of their union, and had often dwelt on the theme, till distrust and apprehension were alike silenced: now she assiduously shunned him, now she laughed at his protestations, and ridiculed his pangs.

"Vannina," he exclaimed, "once our meetings were not the sport of accident; once they were frequent and tender; once they teemed with confidence and love: but now——"

Benevento paused; he could scarcely breathe: his firmness, his resolution, vanished in her presence.

"What now?" questioned Vannina, carelessly playing with the rose in her bosom

"Alas! now," articulated her lover,  
E. 5 "you

"you are so changed, that I scarce can know you."

"No, 'tis you are changed, Benevento; you are so foolishly jealous, and so ridiculously suspicious. St. Benedict preserve us! I suppose next you will suspect my confessor."

"Suspect! oh Vannina, but for that accursed Isidore, you would not breathe such reproaches: I wish he had rolled down the side of the mountain, ere he had come to poison you with his flattery!"

"Flattery, forsooth!" contemptuously repeated Vannina—" 'Tis a proof you don't know him, boy—Isidore always speaks the truth."

"No matter!" dejectedly pronounced the page. "I sought you, Vannina, to say a few words, ere I——"

"Speak quickly then, good Benevento," interrupting him, "for I am in haste."

"I came," faltered the page, and his eyes bent in the deepest melancholy, "to give you ~~back~~ your vows, to tell you my heart

heart harbours no resentment at your perfidy, and to say that I will pray for your happiness, in distance."

"In distance!" echoed Vannina—"bless me, Benevento, are you going to travel?"

"I am going to quit the Castle."

Vannina started. This indeed was an unexpected step: to know that her preference of Isidore had devised such an expedient, was triumph to her vanity; but to lose one lover, ere she had secured the other, agreed not with the policy of her arrangements; it was an insult to her charms; it seemed as though Benevento, at discretion, possessed the power of throwing off his shackles, and regaining his freedom.

"It must not be," thought Vannina; and, summoning to her aid a smile of alluring sweetness, she asked how long the service of the Signor, and the solitude of the Castle, had become irksome?



"The Castle is not irksome," replied the half-gratified, half-alarmed Benevento; "the Signor, too, is the best of masters; and here the happiest hours of my life have been passed: But you, Vannina, 'tis you who pronounce my banishment, 'tis you who make my former haunts hateful."

"Jesu Maria! how can I pronounce what would give me pain to see effected?"

"Give you pain!" exclaimed the delighted page—"Oh, Vannina, beware what you say!"

"Why should you doubt me?"

"Because I envy the smiles which this pilgrim——"

Vannina, laughing, placed her hand upon the lips of her lover.

For many days, Benevento was happy, because Vannina was circumspect: she no longer coldly repulsed his passion, or talked of the superior graces of Isidore; she returned to all her former practices, she listened

tened to the love ditties of the page, and rambled with him in the surrounding forests. But if Isidore smiled, her heart throbbed with gladness; had he deigned to plead, Benevento and her promises had been forgotten. Such was the state of her heart, such the slender reliance of her lover's happiness, when one evening, later than usual, they returned to Montranzo.

They had passed their accustomed boundary among the mountains; and the calm serenity, and the unclouded splendour of a full moon, had cheated time of its length, for, not till St. Romuald's clock had chimed ten, had they thought of its progress.

The quick eye of Vannina, at a distance, distinguished the graceful form of Isidore on the rampart.—“If he should see me thus attended,” she thought, and that *if* filled her with apprehension. She paused, and, withdrawing her arm from Benevento,

vento, proposed returning by the eastern entrance.

"Are you not afraid?" demanded the page.

"No, not with you," whispered the politic Vannina; and she passed swiftly on. But no sooner had she lost sight of the rampart than her courage misgave her; the spirit, in all its terrors, seemed to stalk before her; and the idea of crossing the black marble hall filled her with dismay.

"How you tremble, Vannina! one would think you had seen a ghost."

"The Virgin forbid!" she murmured, as the truant blood receded from her cheeks.

"Let us return," proposed the page: "in truth, I care not a second time to encounter the monk."

"'Tis you who are afraid," said Vannina, forcing a laugh; but pausing at the darkened

ened portico, "Come on, Benevento, I will guard you.

"By our Lady of Loretto! had you seen him, Vannina, methinks you would be less heroic."

"Would you know him again?" with the effort of assumed courage.

"His figure I shall never forget; his face was shrouded in his cowl."

"'Tis strange!" said Vannina, entering the hall, and pausing as Benevento reclosed the door—"I wonder he does not keep to the Camaldoli cloister!"

"Heaven knows the motive!" he aspirated; and as his eyes pursued the silver shadow of the moonbeam, he fearfully started, for they rested on a figure leaning against one of the pillars.

"'Tis you who tremble now," said Vannina.

"Holy St. Benedict, I saw it!" faltered the page—"There! there!"

Vannina looked in the direction he pointed;

pointed; but the figure, before so distinctly visible, was gone.

"I declare, Benevento, you start at the forms your own fancy conjures. Why, Isidore calls me a coward; what would he think you?"

"Isidore!" repeated the page; "was I to hear him, he should not find me one."

"It isn't in fighting that I would boast his courage," said Vannina, smiling, "but in ghosts. Holy St. Rosalia! why, he no more fears a ghost than I fear you."

"Who knows," said the page, devoutly crossing himself, "but he is one of Lucifer's instruments, sent to overthrow our faith, and to tempt us on to destruction?"

"Pshaw! he looks more like Heaven's instrument," answered Vannina; "for he has courage without bravado, piety without bigotry, learning without pedantry, and firmness without stoicism. Though so handsome, so beautiful, he is as free from self-love or conceit as——"

"Bless

"Bless me," interrupted her companion, "how warm you are in his praise! Methinks he needs no abler champion!"

"What, relapsing? Oh, fie, fie, Benevento!"

The hollow sound of a footfall checked the light banter of Vannina.

"The saints guard us!" she ejaculated, and clung trembling to the arm of her lover.

"It approaches!" faltered the terror-struck Benevento, as, with the rapidity of fear, they hurried across the hall—"Holy Heaven!" for the sounds, becoming more distinct, in solemn measured pauses, echoed along the pavement.

They had now reached the centre of the hall; and the moon, before so brilliant, suddenly became shrouded; an envious cloud, passing over its surface, obscured the silver ray which had lighted their path,  
an

and involved them in momentary darkness. Still the footsteps advanced. Benevento would have proceeded; but Vannina felt as though rivetted to the spot.

The sound paused, and a short quick breathing succeeded. Vannina, alive only to apprehension, threw her arms around the neck of the page, and hid her face on his bosom.—“ Oh! take me hence! take me hence!” she implored; and then she shrieked, for a voice pronounced, “ *Murder!*”

Aghast, palsied, she sank upon her knees, for a heavy hand pressed upon her shoulder.

“ *Vannina,*” exclaimed the same voice, “ *Vannina, revenge the fall of Adelheida—murdered—poisoned——*”

And then the hand was removed, and then the footsteps retreated.

It

It was long ere the terror-struck pair arose from the pavement; it was longer still ere they ventured to look around.

The moon again gleamed faintly; but no object met their eyes: the breeze of night waved the tattered banners, and the ebon marble threw a death-fraught shade.

On reaching the extremity of the hall, they passed swiftly down a vaulted passage, and, ascending a flight of steps, beheld the door which opened to the inhabited part of the Castle. As the benighted traveller, wearied with long watching, and exhausted by fatigue, hails the friendly shelter of hospitality, so did Benevento and Vannina rejoice at the gladdening prospect of security. But, alas! the door resisted their united efforts; it was secured on the outside; it shook beneath their pressure, but it yielded not to their strength. Vannina, desponding, drooping, hid her face in her hands, and reclined against the wall; while Benevento,



Benevento, exerting all his powers, called loudly for assistance. But his voice, lost in distance, returned no echo but his own; and, reduced to the dreaded alternative of either retracing the hall, or ascending the eastern turret, passing through the picture-gallery, and crossing the very passage which led to the subterranean, he fearfully entreated Vannina to determine.

"Jesu Maria!" she sobbed, "I dare not enter the hall—I dare not cross the passage."

"Then must we stay here," said Benevento.

"Then must I die," concluded the weeping girl.

"*Live,*" said a low hollow voice, "*and bring to light a deed of horror. 'Tis the accusing spirit of Adelheida bids you revenge her murder. The trial approaches; the test of guilt must be proved. Vannina, in the hall of justice, you must give your evidence, and convict the murderer!*"

Vannina

Vannina heard no more: a stiffening horror pervaded her heart, and stretched her lifeless in the passage. Love banished fear from the mind of Benevento: he heard the dying echo of retreating steps, but he started not; Vannina occupied every idea, filled every thought with tender apprehension. He raised her in his arms, he called upon her name; but she answered not, she heard him not; a clay-cold damp hung upon her forehead, and her arms, stiffened, powerless, hung listless at her side.

In the terror-stricken fancy of the page, the iron hand of death had already sealed the eyes of his beloved, had already bequeathed on the rich treasure of his hopes. —“Holy Virgin!” he articulated, and his tears streamed upon the pallid cheeks of Vannina.

Suddenly, recollection, like a ray of heaven-born light, darted athwart his brain, and pictured the possibility of exertion yet averting

averting the threatened fiat of fate.—“Yes, she may, she will be saved!” he exclaimed, as, with the elasticity of new-born hope, he laid her gently on the floor, and sprung upon his feet.

Swift as a bird he flew down the passage, ascended the turret-staircase, passed through the gallery, nor cast one glance of fear towards the subterranean. Vannina dying was the goading spur to exertion; and had the spectre-monk himself barred his passage, he could scarce have daunted his ardour.

He paused not till he gained the presence of Di Rinaldini, nor then, but a sufficient time to explain the situation of the sufferer, and to solicit assistance.

The fainting form of Vannina was quickly conveyed to her apartment; but long was it ere she gave signs of returning life, long was it ere she recognised surrounding objects,

jects, or felt herself in safety. But even then, the murmur of gratitude, the smile of joy; was transient; alive to the terrors of fancy, and weakened by the long lapse of animation, delirium seized her brain, and the whole night through, between the broken starts of slumber, she raved upon the spectre, and uttered the most wild and incoherent plaints; she talked of a trial, of judgment, of murder; spoke of the pale ghost of the Lady Adelheida; said that Heaven had appointed her its instrument of retribution, and that the blood of the innocent must be avenged.

A few days were sufficient to restore the unhappy girl to health; but whole weeks dissipated not the gloom which an incident so awful and so mysterious had created.

Every member of the household had become infected; the story had passed from mouth to mouth, and the darkest surmises  
were

were whispered, the most terrifying presages apprehended.

Isidore, still an infidel, stemmed the torrent of opinion; he would listen to the superstitious flights of Vannina, but ever conclude with his long-imbibed decision of treachery:—" 'Tis no ghost," he would exclaim—" no, 'tis the malice of the devil, animating mortal mould."

"Alas! I tremble for you," would reply Vannina; "your scepticism will yet draw down the horrors of eternal wrath: in this world, your hopes will be defeated; and in the next——"

"In this world, my hopes are defeated," interrupting her, "are overthrown, are immolated; but for the next," with a smile of sweet security, "for the next, Vannina, I feel no terrors."

"The saints guard us!" aspirated Vannina; "but methinks presumption and infidelity hath reason to fear."

"I am

"I am not presumptuous," eagerly exclaimed the youth—"I am no infidel. You mistake my character. I know, I reverence the tenets of Christianity; but I fall not into the ready snare spread to entrap the ignorant."

"The ignorant!" petulantly muttered Vannina.

"Pardon me—the bigoted," rejoined Isidore. "While in peace I can lay my head on my pillow, while my conscience acquits me of intentional evil, and my heart throbs with charity and goodwill towards my fellow-creatures, surely I may picture futurity without dread."

"I too can question the secret Mentor of my actions," she replied; "but I cannot brave the powers of darkness."

"Brave them!" repeated the pilgrim; "no, Vannina; Heaven forbid that I should place such confidence in my own strength! I pray the Virgin to enable me to resist temptation, and all the train of attendant evils; but to brave——"

"Why then," interrupting him, "persist in a disbelief of spirits? I suppose, if, rising from the tomb, it had told you to live, and bring to light a deed of horror; if it had called itself the accusing spirit of Adelheida, and fixed on you to avenge her murder; if it had told you the trial approached, the test of guilt must be proved, and, in the hall of justice, you must give evidence, and convict the murderer, you would still persist in affirming it a counterfeit."

"Did the voice say so?" questioned her attentive auditor.

"The spectre said so," replied Vannina.

"Be it so, my good girl; but what could it mean? who could it accuse? who could it convict?"

"St. Benedict preserve us! how should I know? Mother of God! I asked no solution. Time will unravel the mystery, and place the burden of guilt on the right shoulders."

"Then

“ Then you think the Signora Adelheida was murdered ? ”

Vannina trembled, breathed an *ave Maria*, and hid her face in her hands.

“ Did she die by the dagger’s point,” importuned Isidore, “ or by—— ”

“ The spectre pronounced poison,” faltered Vannina, and then again she paused.

“ Who could administer the dose ? who could infuse the deadly bane of life ? ” demanded the pilgrim—“ Guarded by the sheltering arms of a husband’s love, how could malice, how could revenge, gain entry ? ”

“ I believe it not ; but some say the Signor knows more of the story than the world supposes.”

Vannina spoke in a whisper ; but the soul of her hearer imbibed every sentence : his mind seemed labouring with some new,



some pressing matter—"Curse him! curse him!" he ejaculated.

"Curse who?" asked the astonished girl—"curse the Signor?"

"Oh no, no," resumed the youth; "may Heaven multiply his blessings! may peace, may honour, may safety, may smiling content, unclouded joy, and never-failing prosperity, hover around his dwelling! may his nights be tranquil, calm as his pure thoughts! may his days, his life, be as the cloudless ray of summer! and should time, should destiny, heal his griefs, and crown him with another love, grant, Omniscient Father, that long, long years of felicity be his portion! Oh! teach her to know the blessing of her lot; inspire her with the sweet sympathies of affection; teach her to lighten the bondage of existence—teach her, like the smiling cherub Comfort, to glean all his cares, to be a miser of her own!"

"Who then would you curse?" demanded Vannina.

The

The pilgrim raised his tear-fraught eyes to Heaven—"I would curse," he exclaimed, and his voice, from the tremulous emotion of tenderness, gradually swelled into power—"I would curse the enemy of Di Rinaldini's honour, the secret foe of Di Rinaldini's repose—yes, may the barbed arrow of revenge recoil upon the designer! may reproach and infamy overthrow his machinations! may remorse, horror, despair, condemnation, gnaw his guilty soul, and turn him to repentance!"

Vannina suffered the pilgrim to depart, without essaying to change his opinion: confirmed in her own, she pitied the blindness she could not remove, and alone trusted to time and circumstances to work conviction.

Isidore, alike firm in his decisions, felt all his former suspicions return with encreasing force. The incident which had spread terror and dismay throughout the household,

hold, he hailed as a prelude, not to supernatural, but to mortal violence: he felt a never-slumbering presentiment, that the safety of his friend was threatened, and wished, yet knew not how, to warn him of his danger; yet, unable to substantiate a plea stronger than surmise, how could he act? what could he affirm? To talk of impending evil, when the very shadow could not be descried, to urge flight, when the motive was ideal, would bespeak him the slave of weak and pusillanimous apprehension. He knew Huberto, in the indulgence of melancholy, had insensibly imbibed a tincture of superstition; he knew he would not second the design of sifting the mystery to its foundation. The domestics were too credulous to aid him; and alone, no project could succeed.—“It is to Providence the event must be left,” he mournfully concluded; “time will unravel the web of destiny, and proclaim the cause of innocence.”



## CHAP. IV.

What means

This sudden chillness, sadd'ning round my heart,

In short, faint flutt'rings, never felt before?

Ah! fatal residence! From the first hour

These walls became *my dwelling*,

Each diff'rent moment brought some diff'rent pain.

ALZIRA.

Hah! what art thou?

Art thou substantial in thy form, or air?

Dost thou glitter to betray? Aye; I feel

Thy sharpen'd point, and press thee in my grasp.

The flitting shade is tangible as thou!

I will drag it forth, e'en from the centre,

And pursue it, tho' it lead to hell.

For several days the gloomy stillness of  
Montranzo was undisturbed; the hours of  
F 4 midnight

midnight rolled suddenly away, and no death-fraught sounds, no mysterious appearances, agitated the hearts of its inhabitants.

Di Rinaldini mechanically pursued the solitary monotony of his life, and wore out his hours in contemplation, in visiting the canon of St. Romuald, and in rambling among the Appennines.

Isidore, brooding over the quick succession of almost shapeless ideas which floated in his brain, mused over the past, and trembled at the future. A barren waste seemed to spread itself before him—a desolation so cheerless, that humanity, shuddering, recoiled from the view. 'Tis true, memory crowded not the past with broken vows, disappointed hopes, or mourning friends ; but the present, alas ! the present, was fraught with the acute sting of self-accusation.—“ Patience cannot assuage my anguish,” he would exclaim, “ fortitude cannot

cannot surmount, flight cannot remove the hidden cause. Ah, no, no! In my heart's core it is buried; there, to the latest moments of existence, will it linger, and the last pang of memory will it corrode."

"Jesu Maria! what a cheerless prospect!" said Vannina, who had caught the last sentence as she stole softly to his side.— "Come, unburden your grief; let not smothered woe cramp the energy of life. Surely some secret sorrow, some direful tale, oppresses a heart worthy of the purest joy. Make me your confidante, Isidore: it is true I am young, but, if not an adviser, I may prove a consoler."

"A consoler!" repeated the youth, vainly struggling with his tears; "alas! 'tis an office which claims no influence in a case like mine."

"'Tis an office whose extent you know not," eagerly rejoined Vannina—"Holy Virgin!" gazing on his face, and forgetting Benevento, and her promises, "Isidore,

I will be faithful, I will be secret. Give me your griefs, give me the tale of your sorrows: I will pity, I will sympathize, I will comfort you."

"Kind, excellent, tender Vannina!" answered the youth; "trust me, my heart acknowledges your goodness."

"Your heart!" tremulously repeated the gratified girl.

"Yes, my heart, though goaded with the racking tortures of calamity, still has room for gratitude."

Vannina forced a smile.—"Why then," she resumed, "restrain its impulse? When I am sorrowful, Isidore," taking his hand, and looking with bewitching softness in his face, "the sympathy of a friend is a grateful relief to my feelings. There is no wound beyond the reach of alleviation. I have heard the Lady Abbess of Corpus Domini say, the disease and the cure come from the same hand."

She

She paused for an answer ; but Isidore was silent : he stood with his hands clasped, and his eyes fixed on Heaven.

“ Do not sigh so heavily,” pursued the loquacious comforter ; “ time will blunt the keenest edge of sorrow, and turn the sound of mourning into joy. Come, quit this window, its prospect is so melancholy and so desolate : I wish you would occupy some other chamber. This turret is, as it were, shut out from the world ; and the rock that faces it is so black and so gloomy. If I was the Signor, I would cut down ~~yon~~ grove of cypress ; and as for the weeping birch and——”

“ Cut it down, Vannina!—Oh no ! that grove of cypress, that spot, seems formed for solitary delight : for whole hours do I gaze upon it, do I watch the tall heads of the pines and cedars that wave upon the mountain. It is a romantic idea ; but as I view them bending to the breeze, methinks



it is as the being combating the gale of misfortune; it is——”

“ True,” eagerly interrupted Vannina; “ and, trust me, the pious heart will brave many as rough a tug, ere it be discomfited.”

“ The sense of feeling,” observed the youth, “ is——”

“ I know it, I know it,” again interrupted his companion; “ it is a selfish sorrowful indulgence, which feeds the languor of melancholy, and courts the stillness of seclusion. Do forget it, Isidore; do drown it in the powers of harmony;” and she took his lute from the table, and held it towards him.

“ Harmony will not heal the sickness of the heart,” said Isidore, faintly smiling.

“ It will sooth the agitation of the spirits though,” rejoined Vannina.

The pilgrim took the instrument, and, with a tremulous finger, swept the strings.

“ Oh !

"Oh! how sweet it is to hear you! me-thinks I could listen for ever," whispered Vannina, rising, and softly opening the casement.

The youth paused.

"'Tis only that the sounds may extend, Isidore. Should the Signor be walking on the rampart, he will thank me."

"The Signor!" exclaimed Isidore; "does the Signor like my music?"

"Is it possible to hear, and not like it?" asked Vannina.

"But the Signor?" murmured the youth, looking eagerly in her face.

"Oh! for whole hours he will stand beneath the turret; and so do I too, Isidore; and there's Benevento, and Ludovico, and Cyril, nay, all the men and maids in the Castle, crowd to the foot of the staircase, when you are singing; and they say—— shall I tell you what they say?"

"I care not," replied the pilgrim.

"They say, their lives on it, you are in disguise."

"In disguise!" starting.

"They say," she continued, regardless of his emotion, "that you must be a minstrel, and no pilgrim."

"Is that all?" said the youth, and in a lively measure he touched the strings of the instrument.

Breathless, Vannina listened. At length he ceased; the spell seemed dissolved; the vibration died away.

"They say," resumed Vannina, eager to divulge the suggestions of the servants, "that you have fallen in love with some great lady, and that her husband, suspecting your passion——"

"Drove me from the Castle," concluded Isidore, with an effort at gaiety, "and compels me to sing my plaints to the woods and winds."

"Heaven help him, and well he might,"  
artlessly

artlessly ejaculated Vannina, "for I am sure there was danger."

"Danger!" repeated the pilgrim.

"Why, yes," rejoined the blushing girl, "for Benevento says, if he believed in witchcraft, he should conclude us all spell-bound, for—for——" hesitating.

"For what, Vannina?"

"For," blushing, and burying her face on her bosom, "the Signor himself never knew comfort till you came to Montranzo."

Isidore fixed his eyes attentively on the speaker.

"It was but last night," she continued, "I heard him say you had soothed a wounded heart. And then there's the picture of your sister! he has hung it up in his library; and many and oft's the time, that his eyes, wandering from the open page, fix upon it. The saints guard us, he calls it friendship; but I," significantly smiling, "I call it love."

"Love!"

"Love! God of Heaven!" ejaculated Isidore, and he placed the lute upon the table.

"By the mass! Hemelfride must be a beautiful creature!" pursued Vannina, unmindful of the interruption; "and methinks 'twould do the Signor di Rinaldini's feelings no violence to save her from the veil."

Isidore clung to the back of his chair; for a moment he seemed lost in thought; suddenly starting, "Vannina," he inquired, "do you imagine the Signora Adelheida's image is effaced from the memory of the Signor?"

"Certainly not effaced," archly replied Vannina; "but since he has possessed the picture of Hemelfride, his visits to the picture of the Lady Adelheida have been less frequent. Perhaps it is because she is so like you, Isidore.—I wish you would bring her to the Castle. Does she play on the lute?"

She

"She learned to play at Corpus Domini," replied the youth.

"Ah! but there she could only play hymns and psalms," said Vannina: "I am sure, if she was to warble one of your love-ditties, the Signor would be transported. Can't you teach a love-ditty, Isidore?"

"Me, Vannina!" hesitating—"I—I—I fear——"

"What can you possibly fear?"

"Nothing—nothing, my good girl. But does the Signor," averting his eyes, "so often visit the picture of Hemelfride?"

"Yes; but remember it is under the plea of its reminding him of you. Once I hinted my thoughts——"

"Your thoughts!" eagerly; "what are your thoughts?"

"Once I told him, if the portrait had been decked in a pilgrim's garb, his gaze would not be so long or so ardent."

"Holy Virgin! and what did he say?"

"He made no answer; but for three whole days he banished himself the library."

"Nay,"

"Nay," in a tone of unusual impatience,  
" 'twas you who banished him the library."

"Me, Isidore!—Oh no! Jealous of her prerogative, it was the image of the Signora that rose in reproach against him, for he cannot love Hemelfride, without falsifying his vows to her."

"Surely her death dissolved those vows?"

"Yes, I should conceive so; but as we know it possible for her spectre to return to its former haunts, surely we may think it possible for it to remember what passed in her life. We know not what passions we carry with us into the other world. If you had heard him, a thousand and a thousand times, swear to live for her, and her alone, you too might be staggered."

"Passion," mournfully observed the pilgrim, "passes not the verge of this world: it dies with the flesh; it ascends not with the spirit."

"I care not to dispute the point with you," said Vannina—"I only know, that  
amidst

amidst all the sufferings of the Lady Adelheida, the sharpest pang of death seemed her separation from the Signor. Alas! if you had seen him hanging over her, if you had seen the agony depicted in his countenance, you never would have lost the impression. To my dying day I shall hear her shrieks, and see her contortions: and then the Signor, he was the tenderest lover, the fondest husband; he did so dote, I verily believe he envied the breeze that kissed her cheek: she seemed to comprise his very existence. And her poor father, the Conte Alverani, he flew about the Castle, like one distracted. Oh, it was such a scene! if it had not been for Father Brazilio—But what a feeling heart you have, Isidore!" checking herself; "how you weep! Well may the Signor say there is comfort in your sympathy."

"Leave me, Vannina," murmured the youth; "dear, dear Vannina, leave me."

"Leave you in affliction! would you reproach me, Isidore?"

"Heaven



"Heaven forbid! No, my too attentive friend, when I solicit, when I implore you to leave me, it is in the hope that reflection may restore me to calmness."

"Is reflection necessary to suppress the sorrow which the sufferings of another have excited?" demanded Vannina, and she fixed on him a look of suspicious import.—"One would suppose your tears flowed from a nearer interest than compassion."

"My tears were ever the little all I could offer to misery," replied Isidore: "think, then, when the claim is strengthened by gratitude, is solicited by friendship, how near, how dear a sympathy it must excite! 'Tis true, I knew not the Signora Adelheida; but her fate I lament, her woes I compassionate. The Signor di Rinaldini——" his voice faltered—"Adelheida is at rest, and still he suffers; Adelheida slumbers in the grave, but he is a stranger to peace; his prospects desolate, his hopes blasted, exposed to the wily machinations of an inveterate enemy, and suspected by his own domestics. Ah!  
where

where is a fate more bitter?" clasping his hands, and raising his streaming eyes to Heaven.

Vannina again whispered composure; but Isidore was absorbed in his own ideas: his features marked the quick succession which floated in his brain. Vannina decyphered not their expression; lost in wonder, she gazed upon the pilgrim, amazed at a strength of compassion, she thought human nature could not feel.

"Father of Heaven!" he articulated, forgetful of observation, "can it be possible, can the heart of man——"

Suddenly he paused, suddenly he remembered Vannina, and, with forced calmness, once more besought her to leave him——"When my mind is more tranquil, when my tears have ceased to flow——"

But Vannina was gone, the turret was deserted:

deserted: alone, he could indulge in the luxury of grief; he could vision the delights of a world where friendship's pure flame glowed unalloyed, where love, sacred, hallowed, freed from disappointment and from woe, threatened not its votary with destruction. Forms the most seraphic seemed to hover around him, sensations of the purest transport palpitated his heart, and glowed upon his cheek: but short was the illusion; it faded, it vanished, it died away:—that world was the phantom of imagination, that world existed but in idea; reality's barren prospect returned, and

“ Grief, whelming grief, drown'd all his faculties,  
And left him nought but tears.”

During the day, the abstracted melancholy of Di Rinaldini appeared to have returned; he spoke seldom, shunned even the society of Isidore, and at night early retired to his chamber.

“ Ah,

“ Ah, mistaken inference !” thought the pilgrim.—“ The portrait of Hemelfride cheats him not of one single sigh. Love cannot be subverted—never, never ; when once the fire is kindled, when once the soul is enslaved, time nor reason, force nor subterfuge, can efface the passion. Adelheida lives in his mind ; the powers of fancy restore her to his arms, and the powers of fancy outstep the limitations even of death.”

Lost in thought, he leant against the casement : the hours of night passed unheeded, the midnight bell had tolled ; yet still he retained his station. His mind was a prey to melancholy ; perhaps its sickly tint jaundiced surrounding objects, for, ever and anon, he fancied he traced a passing shadow flitting beneath the battlements ; nay, in the shrill whistling of the blast, he pictured discordant voices, and often started, with an apprehension before unfelt.—“ What do I fear ?” he ejaculated, casting

casting an assured look around the chamber—" 'Tis for the guilty to tremble; the innocent, in their hearts, possess a safeguard. 'God of nature,'" again turning to the casement, and tracing in the intervals of light, which a clouded moon partially emitted, the dark vapours which hung on the sides of the mountains, "sublimed, entranced, I behold thy works, till admiration, wonder, awe, swell into being, and picture thy immensity, and my insignificance. Ah! where, but in thy promises, but in the eternal life of thy mercy, lies the healing balm for sorrow? where the consolation for human ills? where the panacea for temporal evils?"

A deep sigh reached his ear: it was not the coinage of his own creation, it was no illusion. "The sound lingered, it filled the chamber; horror chilled his blood, and every faculty of his mind was suspended. Pale, fainting, he sank upon a chair, and, as his eyes wildly wandered around, the  
sickly

sickly lamp burned dimly in the socket. The very echo of his own quick breathing filled him with dismay. For many minutes all continued still, save the encreasing violence of the wind, which seemed, in sullen gusts, to shake the fabric.

Ashamed of his weakness, blushing at his idle terrors, he drew his chair near the table, trimmed the lamp, and sought, by a book, to change the current of his ideas; but the page was dull, was uninteresting—at least for him it possessed no charms. Dissatisfied, he threw it aside, and reclined his head upon his arm: his mind revolved the expiring agonies of Adelheida, and the mystic horrors of the Castle; the ambiguous surmises of Vannina returned in full force—"Injured sufferer!" he articulated, "what is my fate to thine! Murdered in the moment of happiness—murdered! and by whom—Blessed Mary!" for a hollow sob echoed through the apartment.

Again fancy peopled the fantastic shadows of fear, and Isidore impulsively hid his face in his hands. But the reign of terror was transient; Reason regained her powers: he rose from his chair; he attentively examined the chamber, secured the door, and lifted up his soul in prayer. Calmed, elevated, his heart no longer throbbed in tumultuous apprehension, his eye no longer wandered in superstitious dread; he felt relieved, he felt assured of safety, whence all safety flows; and, leaving the lamp still burning, he retired to his bed.

Repose, wafted on the pure wing of conscious innocence, weighed down his eyelids; but imagination, long upon the rack, partook not of the body's stillness. Transported into the airy regions of ideal fantasy, he found himself wandering alone through dark and unknown passages, groping against walls mildewed with unwholesome damps, and stumbling over the uncarved stones of new-made graves. Suddenly a  
voice,

voice, shrill and deep, forbade him to proceed; a form, shrouded in the habiliments of death, checked his progress. One skeleton hand guided a lamp, the other was extended towards him. In silence he followed. The trembling flame burned dimly, and the misty form of the guide was scarcely visible. It paused beneath a low arch; it pointed to an iron grating, and articulated, "Go not in, for the scene is murder—go not in, for the tax is death."

While yet he stood irresolute, with a noise like thunder, the barrier disappeared; it sank, it vanished, and the interior burst to view.

It was a lofty melancholy chamber, hung with black, and lighted by wax tapers; in the centre, beneath a canopy, was placed a coffin; the pall swept the earth, and, as he approached, the sable plume of the



canopy waved lightly to and fro. An invisible hand raised the pall; he leant forward, he looked fearfully upon the lid—he read the name of *Adelheida*; and instantly, with the inconsistency of a dream, the coffin and the lights vanished.

A yawning gulph remained; a heavy hand pressed upon his; he turned, and beheld the fleshless head of Death behind him. He started; the hand grasped him more firmly; the shroud opened; as a light cloud, it seemed to envelop him; he struggled for freedom, but he struggled in vain; an exclamation of horror burst from his burning lips, and, as he reached the chasm, the spectre seemed to totter on its brink. Gradually it sunk, gradually it dragged him downwards: the sensation was too agonizing for endurance: by a desperate effort, the shackles of sleep were severed; but, as the dream vanished, as the powers of recollection returned, as he unclosed his  
eyes

eyes to convince himself the illusion was past, he caught the glimpse of a figure receding from the side of the bed.

He started erect. The lamp was fast wasting ; yet its yellow gleam shone upon the noiseless step of the intruder, sufficient to disclose the dark outline of the form. It crossed the chamber, and, in a low recess, opposite the bed, it disappeared.

In the instant that the piercing eye of Isidore lost the tract of its footsteps, in the instant that it seemed to melt, as it were, into air, something heavy dropped upon the floor ; it rolled for a moment, and then, with a quick and regular motion, the sound died away.

The heart of the youth beat high ; his sleeping and his waking visions seemed one ; each moment he expected to see the coffin of Adelheida rise to view, to feel the clay-cold touch of the spectre, and to be  
c 3 dragged

dragged by it into the abyss. His eyes continued rivetted on the object of alarm : it moved not ; it sparkled with uncommon lustre ; it looked as though it gave not received light from the nearly exhausted flame of the lamp.

With a sudden effort, he sprung from the bed ; he stooped ; he grasped the hilt of a dagger : the blade was polished, the point sharp. Shuddering he gazed upon it—" A dagger !" he articulated, and the thought of murder paralyzed every limb. —" Power supreme ! was my blood destined to flow ? was it my life he sought ? did fear mark the coward steps of the assassin ? Defenceless, sleeping, I could not have evaded the blow, I could not have resisted. My struggles would have been spent in vain, my shrieks could not have reached the ears of defenders. Oh no ! alone in this turret, no eye could have beheld the deed, no tongue could have told the story : unappeased, unavenged,  
my

my heart's blood might have flowed, and the eye of suspicion marked not the murderer. Merciful Father! thou hast softened the heart of guilt; thou hast blunted, in mild compassion, the aim of vengeance; thou hast touched with remorse the polluted mind of an assassin, and spared me yet to breathe thy praises! But Huberto—ah, there may the guardian shield of safety hover!—Huberto! Holy Virgin! perhaps, while yet I linger, danger and death surrounds thee; perhaps, stealing to thy side, a heart more firm, more hardened, may aim the blow; perhaps now thou art bleeding, gasping—horror! distraction! perhaps thy pale, cold corse alone awaits me! Ah, forbid it, Heaven! be mindful of a life so precious! Spare but Huberto; make him all your care: 'tis virtue's self—'tis goodness, honour, truth, I plead for!—That sob, that sigh," fearfully pausing—"could it have been the effort of expiring nature? could it have been the lingering struggle of existence? could it have been Huberto?"

The impossibility of the conclusion, arising from the distance from his chamber, was not once remembered; the last struggle, the dying agony of his friend, filled every idea, and turned to despair, every thought.

"I will away," he exclaimed—"duty, gratitude, urges me to exertion. Di Rinaldini, if I cannot save, I will avenge thee! Thy foe has armed me: this steel shall drink his blood—witness, Heaven, I will not rest until I have dragged him from his hiding-place, until I have torn the secret enmity from his treacherous heart!"

With frantic eagerness, hurrying on his clothes, and firmly grasping the dagger in one hand, and the lamp in the other, he flew from the turret, nor once paused till he reached the chamber of Di Rinaldini.

As he pushed open the door, his agitation amounted to a height almost terrific; his

his knees smote each other; his dark locks hung disordered upon his forehead; his cheeks were colourless, and his eyes wildly searching. The short quick breathing of the pilgrim, more than the noise of his entrance, betrayed him.

Huberto, who, although the clock had struck four, had not yet courted repose, had not yet reclined his wearied limbs upon his couch, but sat at the table, watching the wasting lamp, in joyless melancholy, started from his seat. Amazement, apprehension, chased the deep cast of thought, and spoke in every feature.—“Isidore!” he exclaimed —“prophetic Heaven! so pale! so trembling! armed with a dagger too! Unhappy boy! speak—tell me your errand? why do I see you here?”

“Not dead—not murdered!” faltered the livid lips of the youth—“Father, I thank thee! he lives, he breathes!” and the extreme of tumultuous joy produced the most happy effect: the dagger, the lamp, drop-

ped from his nerveless hand ; he sank upon a seat, and burst into a passion of tears.

Di Rinaldini, who had attributed all to the overthrow of reason, to the wild start of madness, gazed on him in silent compassion ; he hailed his tears as a happy harbinger of returning sanity, nor, by a word, by a single effort, sought to dry their source. But the dagger staggered his conclusion : how to trace it to the hand of Isidore, he knew not ; yet, but a moment before, had the hand of Isidore grasped it. He feared to raise it from the floor, lest the action should arouse the attention of the weeping boy ; yet, as it lay, his eyes rested on the studded brilliants of the hilt, and each fresh coming moment produced fresh wonder.

It was long ere Isidore withdrew his hands from his face, it was long ere the heavy sobs of sorrow ceased to agitate his bosom.

He

He rose, as though actuated by a sudden thought, and moved quickly towards the door; but as he approached it, he stumbled over the dagger: he shuddered, yet appeared to gain strength from the sight, and, eagerly securing the lock, took it up, and placed it on the table.—“ This dagger is substantial,” he exclaimed—“ it is no visionary form, no delusion of the brain.”

“ Substantial !” repeated Huberto, believing his dreaded surmise realized—“ Gracious Providence, what a wreck is here !”

Isidore, diving at once into his suspicions, forced a smile, as he said, “ Your fears deceive you, my friend. Thank Heaven, my mind is collected ! It is an incident almost unparalleled which has given it, for a moment, an appearance of derangement.” And then he recapitulated the event which has already been detailed. “ Fears for your safety,” pursued the pilgrim, “ led me hither: I dreaded lest vengeance should have more than one emissary ; I dreaded lest a hand more firm



should be fated with your destruction. Think what were my feelings, as I hurried from the turret; what my terrors, as I pushed open the door of your apartment!"

"Tender, affectionate, kind Isidore!" murmured Di Rinaldini, taking the hand of the youth, and pressing it with ardour—"One heart, at least, is interested in my welfare."

"Oh! thousands would be," he fervently exclaimed, "did they but know your virtues;" and, timid, trembling, he withdrew his hand.

Huberto's eyes involuntarily turned to the portrait of *the novice of Corpus Domini*, which had been removed from its former station, and a half-formed wish, breathed in a sigh, selected her's of the number; but, checking the incitement, "You return no more to the turret, Isidore," he said: "watchful for your preservation, I must not lose sight of you; the remainder of  
the

the night you shall rest by my side, and to-morrow——”

“The night is far spent,” interrupted the youth; “day will soon eclipse the taper’s feeble blaze. Look in the east, Signor; already is the russet dawn awakening; the birds will soon chirp their matin lay. My mind, alas! is too agitated to court repose: do you sleep, and I will watch you. This dagger, so mysteriously mine, shall find a sheath in its owner’s heart, ere he steal upon your slumbers.”

“Mysteriously indeed,” repeated Di Rinaldini; “even now I cannot solve it.”

“Oh! I can solve it all,” eagerly rejoined the youth; “I can decypher the whole of the deep, the iniquitous plot. It is the disturber of the midnight hour—it is the ghost who haunts the Castle who dropped this dagger. Armed with death, he stole into the turret; but fear or conscience conjured a phantom more hideous than himself, and made the murderer fly.”

“The ghost!” said Huberto.

"The pretended ghost," pursued Isidore, "the nocturnal organist, the spectre-monk—all, all one. An incorporeal form could not have grasped this dagger; it would have been as the hand—shadowy. Distinctly I saw him retreat across the chamber: had he been air, he might have vanished."

"Did he open the door?" demanded Di Rinaldini.

"No; in the recess I lost him. Some secret entrance there lies concealed; to-morrow I will search for it. The lamp's contracted rays penetrated not the gloom: in the deepened shadow he disappeared; but at the moment I heard the dagger fall."

"'Tis strange! 'tis doubtful!" exclaimed Huberto, resting his head upon his arm.

"Strange, I'll admit, but not doubtful," resumed the pilgrim. "Playing on a heart almost broken, playing on feelings too deeply stung to arouse exertion, some wily villain has injured the sainted spirit of the  
Lady

Lady Adelheida, by daring to array her gentleness in the garb of accusation. Mark me, if some deep-laid schème, some surreptitious end, be not in view."

"Who can be that villain?" asked Di Rinaldini, musing—"To what end can that appertain?"

"There lies the mystery," answered Isidore: "that, and why my life should be sought after, remains to be discovered."

"Your life, poor boy! Am I so fatal as to involve my dearest friend? is it because I love him the die is cast? God of Omnipotence! my faithful, tender, anxious Isidore! he who has stolen into my soul, and rifled its keenest sorrows; he who has changed the very colour of my being, who, in the gloomy desert of despair, has lighted the lamp of hope—he to die, he to bleed for me! Oh! forbid it, all ye hosts of Heaven! forbid it, justice! forbid it, mercy! In my heart would I hide him, in my heart would I shelter him from every  
blast,

blast of calamity.—Why do you tremble? why do you start? why do you look so pale? why do you breathe such heavy sighs? why do you fix your eyes on Heaven? Isidore, fatal was the morn which led you to Montranzo, fatal the chance which beguiled you from the path—but fatal, doubly, doubly fatal my affection!”

“Fatal!” ejaculated the youth—“oh no! Blessed was the chance which conducted me to this dwelling, blessed the dawn which shone upon my flight!—Holy Virgin!” with a smile of exulting joy, “if ’tis for me to save you, if ’tis for me to avert the aim of murder, then blessed, for ever blessed, be my sufferings!”

“Your sufferings, Isidore! breathe out their source, tell me their amount; be no longer a thrifty miser of your sorrows; confide them to my bosom, grant me the privilege of friendship.”

“Ah! do not ask me,” fearfully; “in pity, I conjure you, waste not the precious moments in a cause so hopeless. Let us hasten

hasten from Montranzo; let us fly, while flight is left us."

"Fly!" reiterated Huberto.

"Oh yes!" eagerly pursued the pilgrim—"where but in flight can we find safety? 'Tis from the malice of our secret foes I would hide you, Di Rinaldini: another night, beneath this gloomy roof, and the compact for blood may be sealed. I will tend your wanderings, I will watch your slumbers. 'Tis true, the canopy of Heaven may be your roof, the earth's green bosom your resting-place; but you will be safe: the beasts of the field are more to be trusted than man; we know their instincts; but man smiles, while he ponders destruction."

"It is a wild project, my friend," replied Huberto.—"Whither could we turn our footsteps? Is it to the hiding-place of Hemelfride you would lead me?"

The youth started; his eyes followed the direction of Di Rinaldini's, and rested on the portrait of the novice.

"Say,

"Say, is it with your sister you would bid me seek repose?"

"'Tis with Hemelfride I would have you seek an asylum," faintly articulated the pilgrim.

"Cruel Isidore!" he rejoined, "to involve one so gentle, one so innocent, one so lovely, in my misfortunes. Ah, surely experience should warn you from a step so dangerous! I loved Adelheida, and she was lost; I love you, and your life is threatened: should I know, should I love Hemelfride, she too will fall a victim. Hide her, carefully hide her, from my sight. Should I behold her, should I gaze upon her charms, should I forget my sorrows, should I love her, that love will be her bane, that love will be deadly to her peace, as poison to the body."

"*Her bane!*" repeated the trembling, almost convulsed Isidore, in faltering accents—"oh no! her heart would cherish, in the preserver of her brother, a friend, a sympathiser in calamity, a fellow-sojourner in  
in

in misfortune ; she would——” hesitating, “ she—she——But let us away, Huberto, let us away. The golden beams of the sun, spangling the dewy fragrance of opening blossoms, court the enterprise ! Let us seek security : by the low portal, opening from the rampart, we can enter the forest ; and ere the domestics have awakened, ere the alarm is spread, be beyond the reach of pursuit. Come, Signor, let us no longer linger.—Who knows,” taking the dagger from the table, “but this may have opened the pass to liberty ; who knows but through the timely discovery of this weapon, we may circumvent the malice of our enemy ?”

“ Fly !” said Di Rinaldini, musing, “ and leave him in exulting triumph ! fly, and leave an enemy the field ! Perish the coward proposal !—Fly, and breathe the tacit conviction of guilt ! Perhaps ’tis the desired end of his machinations, perhaps ’tis the step he aims at. No, Isidore ; sooner would I die than owe life to such a proceeding.”

The



The youth sank desponding on a chair; the dagger still trembled in his grasp, his eyes were still fixed upon it, and a heavy sigh betrayed the depression of his spirits.

"When the day is further advanced," continued Di Rinaldini, "I would remove you from Montranzo, I would——"

"Me, Signor!" interrupting him, "remove me!"

"Yes, Isidore; for till I know you in safety, I shall be a stranger to peace. Not to be the acknowledged sovereign of this extensive universe, would I have you brave a repetition of this night's horrors. In the Camaldoli cloister, the arm of vengeance cannot penetrate to my earliest friend, the canon, I will confide you; and when——"

"Holy Heaven!" ejaculated the pilgrim, snatching with eager haste the hand of Huberto, "what is it you propose!—Throw me from you—doom me to the unsocial gloom of religious fanaticism—remove me from the Castle—banish me your presence!"

presence! No, Huberto, no, my cautious, cruel friend, my soul is incapable of such black ingratitude. If you go, I go; if you remain, not a thousand nights of tenfold mystery shall drive me from you. No sorrow shall you know which I will not deplore, no danger which I will not share."

The remaining hours appropriated to repose were passed in this mutual struggle for each other's safety; Di Rinaldini strenuously urging the sojourn of Isidore at the convent of St. Romuald, and the youth as eagerly opposing. One moment the most subtle reasoning was essayed, the next the most powerful persuasions. Huberto, supported by honour, was not to be shaken; and Isidore, instigated by sentiment and affection, was alike invulnerable.

Once, nature, wearied and exhausted, closed in transient slumber the eyelids of Di Rinaldini. The pilgrim, creeping softly to his side, sustained his drooping head upon  
upon

upon his bosom, and watched him with guardian care. But short was the suspension of pain : the terrors of fancy poisoned the lapse of action, and mocked every effort at composure. Tears stole down his cheeks, and anguished sighs laboured in his breast : with a palsied start he threw himself from the supporting arms of the youth, and, as his eyes unclosed, as they wildly fixed upon the dagger, still labouring under the delusion of his dream—“ Hold ! hold ! ” he exclaimed—“ Monster, restrain your arm ! Here, in my heart, appease your vengeance ; take my life as a ransom for Isidore’s.”

Subdued, panting, breathless, yielding to the emotion of his feelings, yielding to the thrill of gratitude, which, like a raging stream, carried all before it, the pilgrim arose—“ ’Tis all a dream,” he murmured—“ Huberto, the hand of treachery no longer wields the dagger—I am here, I am safe, I am snatched from all danger ; but——”

He

He paused, he shrunk from the warm embrace of friendship.

“But what?” importuned Di Rinaldini, following him to the window—“incomprehensible being, say of what?”

The burning cheek of the youth faded, his heart palpitated, as though it would have forced a passage, and scalding tears streamed from his eyes.—“What have I said!” he exclaimed—“wretched, wretched being! what have I betrayed?”

“Nothing, save an emotion which fills me with wonder,” replied Huberto—“thoughts crowd upon each other: as yet, I have all to learn.”

“Thank Heaven!” murmured the youth, in a voice scarcely audible—“Think of the horrors of this night,” after a moment’s pause, he continued in a firmer tone, “and wonder not at my agitation. In your dream, my life was threatened:—to save it, you offered up your own, I saw the generous effort,

effort, I heard your broken sobs; yes, I saw—Huberto, question me no more; my heart cannot bear it.—Ah, surely,” clasping his hands, “surely upon earth there exists not a bliss superior to the soul’s gratitude, for benefits so unmerited, for magnanimity so profound!”



CHAP.

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**CHAP. V.**

Who rears the bloody hand?

**BYER.**

Then, oh, ye blessed ministers above,  
Keep me in patience ; and, in ripen'd time,  
Unfold the evil which is here wrapt up.

**SHAKESPEARE.**

THE saffron tint of day had tinged the parting clouds, and dappled the misty bosom of creation, when Di Rinaldini, concealing the newly-discovered dagger in his vest, and pressing, in parting, the hand of Isidore, quitted Montranzo by the low portal opening into the forest, and bent his steps to St. Romuald.

Musing on the incident of the preceding night, on the conclusions of the pilgrim, and on his own conviction of treachery, trembling for the safety of his friend, and anxious to devise some method to avert the threatened aim of vengeance, he rested his hopes on the known experience, the tried affection, the genuine professions of the canon, and resolved at once to unbosom his perplexities, and implore his counsel.

From the earliest years of childhood, in the opening dawn of reason, in the gradual expansion of intellect, his had been the fostering hand which had checked the exuberance of passion, had pruned the shoots of knowledge: where had been the difficulty which he had not lightened, where the sorrow in which he had not sympathized? 'Tis true, Father Luitfrido had ever avoided visiting Montranzo; but to the silent receptacle of Adelheida's ashes, he had often bent his footsteps; often there had

had he met the mourning widower, often there had their tears mingled !

Isidore he had never seen, because Isidore, for some hidden motive, had never ventured beyond the rampart of the Castle ; but he had heard from Huberto the story of his difficulties, of his flight, and of his grateful return of affection ; he had heard, that a wanderer, that an outcast, that, unfriended and alone, in mounting the almost trackless passes of the Apennine, in the moment of inevitable destruction, Providence, in Di Rinaldini, had presented a hand to save ; he had heard, that the feeling soul of the youth had magnified the service, until its swelling sensations had exceeded every other idea, and pictured the remainder of his life a slender recompence for one simple exertion of humanity.

Astonished at a flight of gratitude so unlimited, at a warmth of sentiment so uncommon, he longed to behold the being



who had thus relinquished every pursuit, had thus snapped the ties of kindred: and when Huberto, warm in the praises of his youthful guest, repaired to his cell, with painful admiration, with eager tenderness, he would listen to recitals of mysterious import; sometimes condemning the persevering silence of Isidore, sometimes pitying his sorrows, and sometimes almost doubting whether the strength of casual regard could produce an attachment so fervent.

He had just returned from his morning's devotion, had just regained the loved retirement of his cell, when the appearance of Di Pinaldini put to flight the serious expression of his countenance, and lighted it up with the smile of welcome—"Bless you, my son!" he articulated, as he received him to his embrace—"But wherefore," looking attentively in his face, "do I see you thus early? Speak, my esteemed young friend; surely my fears misgive me, or your looks

looks are pregnant with some weighty matter."

"To you, holy father, I ever fly in the moment of difficulty," he replied.—"Ah! surely your tenderness and your wisdom, your admonitions and your lessons, have supplied the want of parents, have sprung the mine of feeling:—yes, 'twas you who taught me to love, 'twas you who moulded the opening impulse of infant fancy; 'twas you who roused my faculties, who animated them to an exertion worthy their extent, suitable to their power; 'twas you who made me what I am——"

"No more," said the gratified canon, "lest I forget the humility of my habit, and magnify the common duties of man."

"Common duties!" eagerly interrupted Huberto—"Oh, father——"

"Yes, I did but cherish in my heart a little foundling, whom misfortune had once made destitute," rejoined the canon; "I did but return the grateful tenderness of a being whose soul was all love, whose mind

was all innocence. Ah, blessed Mary! what consolation, what comfort, did the caresses of infancy inspire! In moments of distracting horror, they softened me to fears, they recalled me to recollection, they blunted the throes of anguish, they robbed misery of its keenest dart.—Yes, often—” But, fearfully pausing, “self-interest, my son,” he at length concluded, “is a ruling passion in the human breast: your tender arms entwined around my neck, your rosy lips, kissing away my tears, beguiled remembrance of many a bitter pang, and cheated time of many a lingering hour.—But to the purport of your visit. You tell me, in moments of difficulty, I am your reliance; say, then, Huberto, what new event impels you to St. Romuald?”

“Trembling for the safety of a friend most loved,” exclaimed Di Rinaldini, “on your known caution and experience I place my sole dependence. Unconscious of offence, ignorant of the enemy, yet does treachery stalk within my Castle walls, and threatens

threatens even the life of the interesting, the affectionate Isidore."

Father Luitfrido started.

"Last night," pursued Di Rinaldini, "when the inhabitants of Montranzo were lost in sleep, Isidore, awakened by a providential dream, beheld the dark outline of a figure precipitately retreating from the side of the bed. He attentively watched him; and as he disappeared through a low recess in the chamber, he dropped this fatal explanation of his errand."

The canon took the dagger; but instantly his hand relinquished it. The most violent agitation succeeded; and for many minutes he perceived not the amazement of his observer. At length, with a heavy sigh, and in a voice which spoke the anguish of his mind, "Is the oblivious calm of repose never to be mine?" he said—"must the phantom of departed bliss ever arise to

mock my boasted resignation, and overthrow the reign of patience? Oh! thou supreme Ruler of the Universe! thou whose justice is inexorable, thou whose glory is eternal, thou whose mercy is infinite, thou whose power is omniscient, wherefore am I thus tortured? what unknown crime am I doomed to expiate?"

"You recognise the dagger?" said Huberto: "perhaps you also know the hand which grasped it?"

"Recognise the dagger!" he repeated, raising his eyes to Heaven—"oh yes! That dagger recalls—that dagger was given on—that dagger—" hesitating, "pierces as deep a wound in memory as its point could in the heart."

"But the assassin—the owner of that dagger?" questioned Di Rinaldini.

"The owner of that dagger was no assassin," proudly replied Father Luitfrido.—  
"He was a man, whose footsteps were marked by calamity, whose hopes were blasted by sorrow—he was a man, who, possessing

possessing this world's good, yet craved a shelter for his own head. He was nobly born, was rich, was happy, was gifted above the lot of ordinary mortals—was a husband—and a father. But affliction came: the dart of woe was aimed—it wounded—it pierced deep. Hurled from the dizzy summit of sublunary joy, he became an alien, a wanderer: he languished under the hardships of slavery; he endured the misery of want."

"Unhappy being!" murmured his companion, in sympathizing accents—"But could want aim at the life of Isidore? could want guide the poniard of the assassin?"

"He of whom I speak," mournfully rejoined the canon, "waged no war against his fellow-creatures. Carefully did he shun the paths of vice, the labyrinths of deceit: he fell a victim to the guilt of others—he bled through the demoniac fury of revenge."

"But the softening hand of angelic participation

icipation was spared him," observed Huberto: "though doomed to combat the rapid vicissitudes of life, yet was he a husband."

"Ah! touch not that string," exclaimed Father Luitfrido, starting almost into madness—"that string, Huberto, will not, cannot bear vibration. Cursed be the hand which severed the hopes of bliss! cursed the hand which pierced the heart of innocence!"

"God of mercy!" ejaculated the horror-struck auditor, "was she too murdered? was she too——"

"Who else was murdered?" eagerly interrupting him.

Di Rinaldini, in silent woe, bent his eyes upon the ground.

"Yes, the life's blood streamed from her bosom," wildly continued the canon.—

"Senseless, dead, they bore her through the shrubbery. We approached, we——"

Huberto,

Huberto, grasping his arm, murmured the name of *Di Montranzo*; and Father Luitfrido sank breathless on a seat.

"True, it was *Di Montranzo*," recovering himself—"the possessor of that dagger was *Di Montranzo*."

"And you?" doubtfully questioned *Di Rinaldini*.

"I," mournfully, "alas! I am a poor, helpless, destitute, bereaved being, whose protracted span of existence lingers out but the agonizing remembrance of what I once was."

"You once was—"

"Happy," he eagerly answered; and then, with struggling reluctance, he changed the conversation.—"You tell me it is the safety of *Isidore* which brings you hither; why then, my son, let a theme less interesting obtrude upon your thoughts, and lavish the moments which ought to be devoted to exertion?"

"What theme can be more interesting  
H. G. than



than the misfortunes of my earliest friend, my truest benefactor?" asked Huberto.

"The immediate preservation of a being, whose existence is threatened, through his gratitude to yourself," replied the canon. "This dagger was found in the chamber of Isidore: if Isidore passes another night in that same chamber, who knows but the efforts of friendship may be unavailing."

"Father, he shall not," shudderingly exclaimed Di Rinaldini: "Isidore shall occupy no other apartment than my own. At night, I will bar the door against intruders, and retain his hand while he sleeps; I will not lose sight of him; I will watch over him with the same anxious care, the same fearful tenderness, which warms the parent's heart."

"Can Montranzo afford security?" questioned Father Luitfrido; "can treachery there be circumvented, and cruelty disarmed? Within this holy sanctuary, all is calm. Bring the poor fugitive hither, my son; confide him to my care. Though  
delivered

delivered from the terrors of pursuit, though long apparently screened from danger, yet you say he is not happy; you say he often weeps, he often turns from the solicitude of friendship. Perhaps religion may solace his woes, may sooth him to peace; perhaps age may licence confidence, argument may produce conviction. Should the heart be the seat of sorrow, the tale once told, the effort once accomplished, the victory may be ours, and the restoration of tranquillity insured. Go, my son, bring your young friend to my cell. I will share it with him; and should he prefer its solitude, be it my care to hide him from the eye of curiosity."

"Alas!" sighed Huberto, "in this one instance Isidore disregards my wishes, yields not to my supplications. When I speak of St. Romuald, when I propose a residence beneath its sacred roof, his looks, his sighs, his tears, reprove the plan which would tear him from me."

"Has

"Has he no fears for his own safety?" demanded the canon.

"Oh no!" he replied; "his fears are all for mine. At first, with the most pathetic vehemence, he urged flight; but when I rejected the proposal, he vowed no consideration of safety, no inducement under Heaven, should draw him from me: '*If you go, I go,*' he exclaimed; '*if you remain, not a thousand nights of tenfold mystery shall drive me from you. No sorrow shall you know which I will not deplore; no danger which I will not share.*'"

"Noble, disinterested boy!" said Father Luitfrido, in accents of admiration; then, after a pause, he added, "Yet, methinks, some more than ordinary motive must influence his actions:—I wish I could see him!"

"You would see a being," answered Di Rinaldini, "whose appearance warrants no such magnanimity, whose light and sylphid figure seems as though the blast of heaven  
was

was too rough to be encountered; whose downy softness of features might mock the peachy blossom of female loveliness!"

"Some mystery clouds all he does, all he says," observed the canon, musing.

"'Tis fears for a sister's safety which impels silence."

"True; his sister, you tell me, is the fugitive novice of Corpus Domini; and, from the resemblance which subsists between them, Isidore confines himself a close prisoner within the walls of Montranzo, lest suspicion should glance at him, and involve the trembling girl."

"That certainly is the reason assigned, holy father."

"Do you think their destinies are divided?" significantly questioned Father Luitfrido.

"I think their destinies one," replied Huberto—"I think Hemelfride can experience no pang which Isidore would not feel."

"From

"From attachment, or—or——"

"Or what?" asked Di Rinaldini.

"Or—or——" resumed the canon—

"Pardon me, my son; I scarce know what."

"If you suspect him as a lover, you are deceived, father: I have seen the portrait of Hemelfride, and the resemblance is wonderful."

"Perhaps too wonderful to exist," remarked Father Luitfrido.

"Oh no!" exclaimed Huberto; "the resemblance of twins cannot be surprising; growing, as it were, by instinctive feeling, surely, if the same passions be engendered, Nature may extend the similarity to the outward form."

"Once more, my son, exert your powers of persuasion to conduct Isidore hither," said the canon. "I feel he is become the object of our united interest. Should you fail, lose not sight of him, and to-morrow some new plan shall be devised;  
to-

to-morrow, if your influence is unavailing, I will sacrifice my feelings—I will visit Montranzo."

"Do you, reverend father, retain the dagger," said Di Rinaldini, rising to depart: "Should it hereafter be called for, should it hereafter be necessary to be produced, in the Camaldoli cloister I will seek it."

On arriving at the Castle, every argument, every entreaty was renewed; but Isidore, who, in every other instance, had evinced all gentleness, was firm, was not to be shaken.—"You know me not, my friend," he would answer, in reply to the ardent prayers, the almost tears of Huberto; "my soul partakes not of the yielding softness of my outward form: Nature may have designed me a coward; "but gratitude," with an arch smile, "stamps me a hero."

Carefully concealing the occurrence of the preceding night from the knowledge of  
the

the domestics, Di Rinaldini and Isidore, unattended, ascended the turret stairs, and narrowly examined the chamber; but not the slightest cavity could they discover; no hidden door, no sliding pannel, through which the intruder could have glided.

“To me it is inexplicable,” said Huberto; “had the dagger not been dropped——”

“You would have attributed the whole to the creative powers of fancy,” interrupted the pilgrim.—“But as it is, rest assured there is some entrance into this chamber which we cannot trace.”

Compelled to relinquish the hope of elucidating the mystery, they returned below; and, as the evening approached, the friendly combat was again renewed; but Isidore assiduously parried every argument, and his friend strove to appear satisfied with the decision of his returning no more to the turret.

The

The sky had long lowered in portentous gloom ; long had the hollow reverberations of distant thunder forewarned the coming storm. The Metremo rolled in sullen violence, and the lofty trees of the forest bowed to the swelling gust. Already did the rain, in large drops, patter against the windows ; already were the clasped hands of Isidore raised in awful dread : a more than usual depression hung upon his spirits, and with difficulty he repressed the tears which trembled in his eyes.

Di Rinaldini beheld not his emotion ; his looks were directed to the rocky bosom of the Apennine, o'er which the vivid lightnings swiftly flashed.—“ How awful is this conflict of the elements ! ” he exclaimed ; turning, and beholding the colourless cheeks of the youth, “ If innocence is thus appalled, what must be the sensations of guilt ! ”

The



The opening of the door checked the response of the pilgrim, and the appearance of Father Brazilio changed even the colour of his fears.

The countenance of Huberto betrayed surprise, for months had elapsed since the monk had visited Montranzo.—“ I come, my son,” said he, “ to crave shelter. Led by the duties of my calling to the humble thatch of indigence, the storm o’ertook me, and the weak terrors of the flesh prevailed.”

“ You are welcome, father!” replied Di Rinaldini; and then he took the trembling hand of Isidore, and endeavoured to inspire assurances of safety.

“ You mistake me,” faltered the youth, as a transient flush of crimson dappled his complexion; “ it is the awe of piety, not the pusillanimity of fear, which you behold. God of nature! can the heart of  
man

man listen to the appalling voice of thy thunders, unmoved? can his eye trace the avenging fire of thy lightnings, unassured?"

The monk smiled ironically.

"I hold not the worthless tenure of life so precious," pursued Isidore, "as to dread its termination. When the past can be revised without reproach, surely the future cannot be decked in terrors."

"Possibly," observed Father Brazilio, "you hold the safety of your friend more valuable than your own?"

"Oh, a thousand, thousand times!" articulated Isidore—"To save the life of Di Rinaldini——" He paused, he blushed.

"Have you no friend but the Signor?" demanded the monk.

The pilgrim hung his head in silence.

"Methinks," resumed the inquisitor,  
"your

" your heroism and your years accord not."

" My years, father!—surely youth is not the season for cold caution and selfish foresight: I have heard its concomitants are ardour, rashness, impetuosity."

" True, boy; yet, in youth, the love of life is strongest, for then are its pictures decked in all the delusions of fancy; then do they smile us on through ages of sorrow; but, as the painted gewgaw, catching the eyes of childhood, vanish in the grasp of possession."

" Alas! often are they never possessed!" articulated Isidore, with a sigh so sad, that the eyes of Huberto and the monk intuitively rested on him—" often do they wreck the heart which formed them! often blast the peace of the too credulous visionary!"

" The heart which is exorbitant in its demands, which seeks its gratification through the medium of disguise, merits the failure of its wishes," pointedly observed Father Brazilio.

" Is

"Is happiness too great a blessing to be coveted?" tremblingly asked the youth.—

"Say, father, is happiness a boon which merits the interdiction?"

"Not happiness," replied the monk; "but the point on which happiness rests. Supposing the desires limited, the attainment virtuous, prosperous will be the breeze, gay the hopes of promise; the heart will feel no loathings, no reproach; it will calmly review the scenes of life, and smile in the contemplation. But should the sacred vows of religion have been severed, should Heaven's immaculate sanctuary have been violated, should the soul have been devoted to God, and the carnal influence of the flesh have burst its bonds, then, my son," stedfastly regarding him, "then the anticipation must be misery, then the denouncement must be heavy."

"Yes, if the vows were voluntary," eagerly rejoined Isidore; "but if compulsion cramped the soul's energies, and silenced

silenced the decisions of nature, surely the efforts for freedom become justifiable."

"The mind once corrupted, once tainted with the sensuality of the world, every obstacle is surmounted," replied the monk: "the path to perdition is flowery, and the sophistry of the tempter strong. When passion dictates, when the weakness of the heart prevails, the germ of virtue becomes annihilated, and all the noble propensities of the mind perish. It is then, like the *thistle's beard* before the wind, we float upon each coming gust, not combatting, but yielding, not reluctant, but subdued."

Isidore fearfully shuddered; he hung his head upon his bosom, as softly he whispered, "Oh no; passion is not the only incentive to freedom!" and then, in a louder voice, added—"In the moment of existence, man inhales the precious privilege of liberty, which but in the moment of dissolution expires."

"Because," rejoined Father Brazilio, "indulgent to our own failings, we call it by a milder term: passion is denominated love. Tell me, boy, could ought but passion, could ought but love, scale the walls of Corpus Domini, or evade the Argus eye of suspicion?"

Huberto sprung from his seat, and the varying countenance of the pilgrim mocked the crimson-tinted rose.

"I see you have heard of the impious flight of the novice, Hemelfride," continued the monk, checking the malignant smile which, for a moment, marked the expression of his features.—"Can you defend the step? dare you justify the united crimes of ingratitude and sacrilege?"

"Remember, father," said Di Rinaldini, "ere we venture to condemn, we should know the secret motive of action."

"What motive," he sternly demanded, "can warrant the murder of the soul?"

Hemelfride was the affianced spouse of Heaven; and cursed be the being who harbours the runagate!"

"Cursed!" reiterated Isidore—"oh no! By nature frail, by nature alike fallible, surely, from age, the errors of youth may claim indulgence."

"Errors!" sarcastically repeated Father Brazilio; "say crimes, black, infernal, damnable crimes!"

"Yet," observed Huberto, "religion teaches forgiveness: it is bigotry alone which indiscriminately condemns. Who that hears the appalling crush of elements, who that traces the vivid flash of electric fire, who that sees the growth of ages rooted, fallen, dare privilege himself to judge; dare limit the power of a Supreme Being? Surely, at a period like this, when each instant teems with annihilation, the accusation of the heart is sufficient."

Father Brazilio arose from his seat; he buried the irony struggling in his breast  
beneath

beneath a well-feigned cloak of humility, and, bowing his head, moved towards the door.

"The tempest rages with increasing violence," said Di Rinaldini: "surely, father, you mean not to brave its fury?"

"I go to the oratory, my son," replied the monk—"it is the hour when the pious brethren of my order meet in the chapel, the hour we pray for the peace and pardon of mankind."

A loud noise from below, followed by a confused murmur of distant voices, now filled the pauses of the storm. Huberto listened; Isidore, with awful dread, raised his clasped hands: the devastation of the Castle was the picture his imagination drew, as his knees bent in the true spirit of piety. The sounds approached. "Mother of God!" he aspirated.

The door was thrown open, and Vannina,



aghast, horror-struck, rushed into the apartment.—“ They are come, they are come!” she articulated—“ the spirit’s forewarnings are fulfilled. A guard from Fossombrone —The—the—the Inquisitorial court—racks —wheels—tortures—Oh, Jesu Maria! the sweet Signora was murdered!”

“ What mean you, Vannina?” demanded the pilgrim, starting from his knees, and grasping her arm—“ in mercy, speak! speak, or you’ll drive me to madness!”

“ Mean!” bursting into a flood of tears, “ why, the Signor is suspected to be a murderer—the Signor is to be dragged to Fossombrone—the Signor is to be tried—the Signor is—is—is—the Signor is to be burnt.”

Isidore sank back for a moment; all sense, all recollection, seemed to forsake him. Suddenly recovering himself, he found Di Rinaldini, in all the solicitude of affection, supporting him; he raised his head from the bosom of his friend; he  
pressed

pressed his hand to his throbbing forehead ; he looked fearfully around.—“ Is it a dream ? ” he articulated—“ say, Vannina, is it a horrid dream ?—Ah, God ! no, ’tis no dream—’tis verified ; ” for the door was opened, and the chamber was crowded with soldiers, in the inquisitorial garb—“ We command you, Huberto di Rinaldini, in the name of the most Holy Inquisition, to surrender yourself our prisoner,” said the principal official, in accents of authority.

Huberto, undaunted, answered by a graceful bow.

“ Of what crime is he accused ? ” demanded the almost frantic Isidore ; “ who has dared asperse a character so perfect ? to taint it with the foul breath of suspicion ? ”

“ It is not for us to answer the idle questions of curiosity,” gruffly observed one of the officials. “ Come, Signor, the storm abates ; there is no time to lose. ’Tis true,

our mules are weary; but we have got the Apennine wilds to encounter, and many a long and sorry league is it to Fossombrone."

The pilgrim, with a piercing shriek, sprung forward:—"Merciful Heaven! merciful, righteous Father!" raising his tear-fraught eyes in earnest supplication, "you cannot, you will not, in such a night, in such a tempest as this, tear him from the shelter of his dwelling.—Oh!" sinking on his knees, while his voice was suffocated with the rising sobs of anguish, "think of the dangers which threaten, and have pity on—yourselves."

"We are not to be frightened by the bluster of the elements, neither is our duty to be shaken by the tears of effeminate weakness," replied the commander.—"Delay us no longer, boy; loose your hold, or force must compel you to obedience."

"Isidore, my beloved Isidore, be pacified," implored Di Rinaldini. "Innocence is a balm, of which the malice of my enemies

mies cannot deprive me: fear not for my safety. The Being I serve, the Being on whom I implicitly rely, will guard me through the darkness of the night, will uphold me even on the precipice's slippery brink."

"To be dragged as a criminal, to be accused, to be reviled," said the weeping Isidore, as panting, gasping, he clung to the arm of Huberto—"to be laden with disgraceful chains—to be plunged into a vile receptacle for guilt and infamy—to be led out the pointed mark of prejudice and scorn—avenging God, where are thy thunders?"

"And yet, my poor friend," said Di Rinaldini, "better to be thus than to live in prosperous villainy! better to be thus, than to possess the conscience of my accuser!"

"To part," pursued the wretched youth, yielding to a fresh torrent of tears, "to be banished, in a moment like this, from the preserver of my life, my benefactor, my

deliverer—to know him exposed to all the hardships, all the dangers of wandering misery, yet to be unable to sooth or console him!—Oh, hear me again!” addressing the guards: “lowly bending on earth, spurn not my prayer: linger but till the morning, and then——”

“What!” interrupted one of the soldiers, “give the prisoner time to escape? No, no, my pretty pleader, we know our duty better.”

“To escape!” indignantly repeated Huberto—“escape accords not with the confidence of innocence.—But,” with returning gentleness, “your vocation warrants the precaution; accustomed to the artifice of guilt, you know not the feelings of the soul wrongfully accused.—Isidore,” clasping the trembling boy to his breast, “be comforted; restrain your tears. The God of justice will protect and restore me to your prayers!—Now, Signor,” turning to the principal official, “execute your orders; I am ready.”

“Stay!”

"Stay! stay!" shrieked the pilgrim; "so ready, so cold—not one tear at parting! Huberto, my soul is racked, and your's unmoved; my heart weeps blood, while your's is cruelly calm."

"Alas! my friend," faltered Di Rinaldini, as struggling he endeavoured to withdraw himself from the frantic grasp of the youth, "you subdue, you unman me: your upbraidings mock the efforts of fortitude: detain me but another moment, breathe but a new reproach, and I am lost."

"Ye too are men," sobbed Isidore, once more kneeling to the guard; "ye too are born with the social feelings of love, of sympathy: turn not from the supplications of a wretch, whose remnant of life is misery. Oh! claim me too a prisoner; take me with Huberto; plunge me in the same dungeon; goad me with the same chains—I will not repine, I will not murmur: I will bless the acquiescence, and, in death, will falter a thanksgiving."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the official,

softened at his anguish; "I can pity, but I cannot take you with me. The letter of my order is to seize the person of Huberto di Rinaldini, not the heroic friend who would share his prison!"

"Name, then, the accusation?" implored the youth; "name the crime for which he is arraigned?"

"The offence is heinous," replied the official: "A denunciation charging Huberto di Rinaldini with the murder of his late wife, has been privately given into the holy office."

Huberto shrunk, not in terror, but in horror; his cheeks grew pale, not from the consciousness of guilt, but from despair at the accusation.

"Murder!" repeated Isidore—"who can believe the charge? who can be blinded by malice?—Say, what fiend infernal has dared——"

"Peace, peace!" interrupted one of the guards:

guards: "again I tell you, prating boy, our mission is not to answer idle questions. We must away."

"Lead on," said Di Rinaldini.

But Isidore, shrieking, threw himself before the door—"If you have a parent, a wife, a child—if you have a being dear on earth—oh stay, and hear me! Di Rinaldini is innocent; he is falsely accused; he is cruelly, barbarously vilified."

"Is that all?" said a soldier. "'Tis for others to weigh the merits of the case. If he is vilified, as you call it, the inquisitorial court is just; if he is guilty, it is also just."

"Just!" echoed Isidore, starting with horror—"Holy Mother! what mean you?"

"Nothing more than, as innocence is sure of an acquittal, guilt is sure of racks and tortures.—Yes," with a smile of unfeeling irony, "we have engines of all descriptions; some suited to forms as delicate as your own.—Come, Signor," addressing the commander, "the storm abates; let us away. Anastagio, Zenone, open the  
16 door;



door ; precede you the prisoner, while I compel this little rebel to submission."

Feeble was the resistance of Isidore ; the firm grasp of Stephano scoffed his efforts ; recollection, strength, motion, all receded : he saw Di Rinaldini forced through the door of the apartment ; he saw his last agonizing look directed towards himself—Alas ! he saw no more : his eyes closed in lifeless apathy ; his head dropped upon the arm of his detainer ; his sobs died away—for an interval he ceased to suffer.

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CHAP. VI.

A dreadful din was wont  
To grate the sense, when enter'd here, from groans  
And howls of slaves condemn'd, from clink of chains,  
And crash of rusty bars and creaking hinges;  
And ever and anon the sight was dash'd  
With frightful faces, and the meagre looks  
Of grim and ghastly executioners.

CONSERVE.

With a heart drooping for the sufferings  
of his friend, Di Rinaldini and his guards  
quitted Montranzo. The night was dark,  
and the track across the mountain scarcely  
to be distinguished; yet did the sure-footed  
mules press cautiously on, now mounting the  
rugged sides of overhanging precipices, and  
now

now descending the wood-crowned heights of the narrow defile. The rain continued to deluge the face of nature; the thunder, in loud reverberations, rocked the earth's foundation; while, ever and anon, long lingering flashes of electric fire, piercing the deepened solitude,

“ Followed the loosened aggravated roar.”

Huberto broke not the sullen silence which his guards preserved: unmindful of his future destiny, he thought alone of Isidore—Isidore, who, shrieking, fainting, he had left in all the anguish of despair, in all the horror of incertitude—Isidore, who, driven from the shelter of security, must now seek an asylum beyond the reach of power, beyond the stretch of persecution.—“ But whither can he bend his footsteps?” thought Di Rinaldini, “ unknown and unknown, whither can he wander? Shackled, enslaved, bending under the yoke of ignominy, I can no more assist him, I can no more hide him from the world's

world's fury. Oh misery ! exquisite misery !  
'tis now I acknowledge the sting of fate,  
'tis now I pant for the bliss of liberty."

The furious conflict of the elements impressed him not with one moment's dread ; indifferent alike to life or death, he heard the mountain torrent, in swelling violence, roll down the precipice below, nor once shuddered at the stumbling accident which might precipitate him within its vortex : he heard the fearful threat of blackening thunder, he saw the vivid flash of Heaven's fires, yet thought not of himself, for

" Alas ! what was the toil of elements,  
The idle perturbations of the sky,  
To what he felt within ?"

Yet were his sensations bliss, compared to the pang which guilt inflicts, compared to the silent accusation of never-slumbering conscience ; in his heart he wore the conviction of innocence, in his heart he wore

" That sweet peace, which goodness bosoms ever."

Death

Death held forth no terrors, for life held forth no disgrace; death was a rest from labour, a passport to felicity; death was the peaceful bourne of the Christian's hope. The guilt of others had made this world a blank, the guilt of others had poisoned the sweet promises of opening love, had rifled the pure joys of friendship, had cast the shade of infamy on his character, had forged the manacles of disgraceful arrestation, had dragged him from the peaceful retirement of Montranzo, and exposed him to the pitiless contrast of wandering misery.

Still the rain descended in torrents. The men, cold and dripping, murmured dissatisfaction, and hesitated whether to proceed; but the chief in command laughed at their complaints, and urged them to exertion.

"Holy St. Dominick, we shall be drowned, if we pursue our route!" exclaimed  
one

one of the men—"Do let us pause till the storm is over."

"Then we may pause all night," was the response.—"But for you, Stephano, and we might have had time for rest. Remember, thanks to your wisdom, we strayed from the direct path, and wasted two whole hours in unnecessary wanderings."

"Well, but we found it at last," muttered Stéphanos, "and secured our prisoner. Surely we may as well deliver him up alive as dead. I warrant me, he never before had such a soaking. By our Lady, a whole bottle of *Lachryma Christi* wouldn't drive the cold from my stomach! What say you, Zenone?"

"Say!" repeated a gruff voice, "why, I say the prisoner will have two murders instead of one to answer for: by my holy rood, I wouldn't stand another hour's pelting, to be Grand Inquisitor."

"I wish we had remained at the Castle," said Stephano; "the ghost, no, nor the devil,

devil, couldn't have used us more scurvily."

"I'd rather be in the storm than with the ghost though," observed Anastagio—

"By the mass! I like not to wage war with spirits, for they can squeeze through a key-hole, as it were, and——"

"Wage war!" sneeringly interrupted Stephano; "why, man, how can that be? Isn't it at the instigation of the ghost that we have seized the murderer? Your heart, Anastagio, is as weak as a woman's. I doubt me, if the fugitive novice of Corpus Domini appeared to you at midnight, whether you'd be able to seize her."

Di Rinaldini started; for the first time, he too felt a coward, for the first time, he acknowledged himself vulnerable to the shaft of his enemies.—"Yes, there they have power to wound," he fearfully sighed; "there, Isidore, through your's, they reach my heart. Unfortunate Hemelfride, dragged  
to

to the altar, you will fall a bleeding sacrifice to insatiate power! Oh God! had she yielded to my suggestions, through the medium of her brother, had she consented to be mine, the influence of her oppressors had been circumscribed."

He wished to question the guard, but he knew not how; he dreaded to betray his feelings; and, overwhelmed with anguish, smothered his regrets in a heavy sigh.

The jarring clouds, which, for a time, had appeared to dissipate, now again rolled in black columns overhead; now again, bursting with electric fire, dinned the frightened earth with their long lingering roar.

The principal official himself, awe-struck, paused, for a vivid flash of lightning marked the brink of a precipice, down which a few steps further must have precipitated him. — "Never did I see such a night," said he;  
"Heaven



"Heaven and earth seem combined against us;" and, half reluctant, half yielding, he dismounted, and gazed eagerly round.

"Do let us seek shelter," urged Stephano and Zenone, in the same breath.

"Remember," rejoined their chief, "we must be at Fossombrone early in the morning."

"By the saints!" muttered Stephano, "if we brave the storm, 'twill be a miracle our seeing Fossombrone again."

"We may be there in the morning, and yet take an hour's rest," said Anastagio.—

"The mules, poor devils, are as weary as their masters; and methinks our prisoner, though he scorns to speak, puts up a pater-noster."

"Where can we stop?" demanded the official.—"In these mountain wilds, no hospitable dwelling smiles a welcome; and as to seeking shelter under the rocks, we may as well remain where we are."

"Yonder is a light!" exclaimed Stephano; "see how it glitters! it is stationary; it  
certainly

certainly shines from a cottage window.—  
Do you stay here," giving his beast to the  
care of Zenone, "while I go and recon-  
noitre."

"Be cautious," said Anastagio: "I have  
heard of Will-with-the-wisps entrapping  
wiser heads than your's."

"But not colder, I warrant me: a warm  
head is often fatal; but, thanks to the rain,  
that will not ensnare me."

With eager haste, Stephano descended  
the ridgy steep which led to the beacon  
of repose, nor paused, till, with exulta-  
tion, he hailed the humble dwelling of  
industry.

His story was scarce recited ere the warm  
greetings of hospitality were held forth;  
and Galiaze, the husband of Lilla, for it  
was the very cottage in which Isidore had  
once so sweetly rested, sallied forth to pilot  
the wanderers.—"Welcome, Signors!" he  
exclaimed: "'tis a cheerless night to pass  
among

among the mountains. Bestir, my Lilla; place a fresh log on the fire, and bring forth your cupboard's store, while I go and stow the mules."

"Lilla," mentally repeated Huberto, and his eyes resting on the sweet and interesting countenance of the cottager, recognised the original of the pilgrim's picture.—"Ah, here is bliss unalloyed!" he thought—"here the pure workings of the heart is the guide of action—here may Nature be traced in her best attire!"

"Why don't you partake of our homely fare?" questioned Lilla, as, with an inviting smile, she held forth a glass of the wine of Montifiascone.—"Come, Signor, you look pale; you are wet, cold, and weary."

Di Rinaldini breathed a heavy sigh.

"This is an elixir I reserve for Galiaze, when he returns from guiding the exploring traveller," pursued the inviter.—  
"Sometimes he is very late, and often  
very

very tired.—Come, I pledge you ;” and, with a grace which might have shamed the studied arts of polished life, she kissed the cup, and again presented it.

“ Pshaw, man, drink !” exclaimed the unfeeling Stephano, who, sheltered from the rude peltings of the pitiless storm, awaited not the pressing instances of invitation—“ drink, hang sorrow, and drive away care ! If you are to be burnt, you may as well approach the stake with a merry face.”

“ To be burnt !” faltered Lilla, and her eyes, turned upon Huberto, seemed to solicit an explanation.

“ It is true,” said he, “ I am their prisoner. Dragged from my abode, I am accused of a crime so black, that your gentle nature would shudder at the recital.”

“ Accused !” sneeringly repeated Zenone—“ by St. Dominick ! ’tis beyond that ; for you are almost convicted, almost condemned. Why, man, if I was as near the  
stake,

stake, I should fancy every thing smelled singed."

Lilla shuddered.—" Poor soul !" she ejaculated—" Methinks he looks innocent. Of what crime is he arraigned ?"

" Innocent, forsooth !" exclaimed Anastagio ; " yes, yes, he is innocent—why, dame, he is *only* arraigned for murder and sacrilege."

" Jesu Maria !" but still her hand withdrew not the cup.—" Take it, stranger," she whispered ; " your heart fails you. If I dare trust my own, you stand acquitted."

" Humane, generous, excellent woman !"

" Nay, no praises," interrupting him ; " take it, I implore you ; it will raise your spirits. I would you could tarry till morning !"

" And would you shelter a wretch so forlorn ?" asked Huberto, softened even to tears—" God of mercy ! would you retain beneath your roof an outcast from society, a man scorned by the world, condemned by appearance ?"

"I am a mother," said Lilla; "and Heaven knows the future fate of my offspring."

"You are an angel!" warmly apostrophized Di Rinaldini.

Lilla smiled, and again held forth the wine.

"What, to a murderer!"

"To a fellow-creature," she concluded.

Huberto snatched the cup; but ere he quaffed it, pressed his burning lips to the beneficent hand of philanthropy.

The entrance of Galiaze, and the repetition of the story, now followed. The hospitable venturino listened attentively to the relation of Stephano; but, like Lilla, his heart yearned to the dejected prisoner, whose countenance, whose look, whose manner, bespoke the firm support of innocence.—"No, he cannot be a

"murderer," he mentally concluded; and then addressing the guard, "Are you sure he is guilty?"

"Am I sure of this wine?" asked Anastagio, emptying the flaggon into his cup.—"I tell you," turning to Galiaze, "a spirit has come all the way from the other world to file the accusation; and if you put a lie into a spirit's mouth, you are a bold man."

Lilla stole softly round, and exchanged the wine for water. The action was not observed, for the rest of the party had quitted the room, to examine the state of the weather; and Anastagio himself was absorbed in the warmth of his argument.

"Did the spirit appear at Fossombrone?" questioned Galiaze.

"At Fossombrone! no, man—why, where the murder was committed, to be sure. I tell you, for months it has not let a soul rest quietly in the Castle di Montranzo."

Galiaze

“He was the Lord of Montranzo,” said Anastagio, smiling in derision; “and to-morrow he will be the lord of his dungeon. Why, look you now, if the great will transgress, where’s the saving clause to shield them from the punishment of the humble? The law admits of no distinction; and law is justice, as much as justice is law.”

“ That, my worthy friend, thank Heaven, I do not crave! keep it for those who have the stings of their own conscience, as well as the upbraidings of men, to contend with. The asseverations of innocence here,” glancing at Anastagio, “ cannot avail.”



avail: 'That God' who reads the heart, that God who knows my secret actions, knows how long the triumphant malice of my enemies will prevail. Should they pursue me to the verge of life, should they doom me to death—nay, to worse than death, to disgrace, to public ignominy, the last bitter moments of agony will be softened, in the remembrance that one honest heart acquits me."

"Two," said Lilla, no longer restraining her tears.

"Oh, spare me!" murmured Huberto—"I could bear insult; I could bear contempt; but this kindness unmans me."

"How easy it is to impose on honest credulity!" sheeringly remarked Anastagio. —"by our Lady, you'll find it a harder task with us! we know all the collusions of guilt, all the trick of artifice. Why, I suppose, next you will swear you did not poison the Signora.—Ah! your countenance betrays you: that pallid hue is the never-failing emblem of guilt. Yes, yes,

as

as sure as this is wine," and he raised the cup to his lips, "you merit the charge—you committed the act." Instantly his hand relinquished it; it fell upon the floor, and his features assumed the mingled expression of amazement and horror.—"A miracle! a miracle!" he vociferated.

"Has the prisoner escaped?" fearfully demanded the official, hastily entering.

"No, no, Signor; he is safe enough."

"What then is the matter, Anastagio? I never saw you so moved."

"Matter!" he repeated—"why, either the devil has been here, or the prisoner is innocent: let us be off; the cottagers are already bewitched—nay, I can scarce answer for myself."

"Assured, but not bewitched," said Galiaze,

"Signor, I would pledge my life for the innocence of my noble guest!"

"Be it for a higher tribunal to acquit him then," observed the commander: "his judges are not the stern tyrants of des-

potism, but the mild agents of mercy. Come, Anastagio, the storm abates; bring out the mules, and let us pursue our journey."

In a few short minutes, Di Rinaldini heard no more the voice of sympathy, saw no more the efforts of compassion: the venturino's dwelling was left far behind, and the distant vibration of the thunder, the louder monotony of the swollen torrent, could be alone distinguished. But in the mild breasts of simplicity he had left a pleader, in the hearts of virtuous poverty he had awakened regard: Galiaze talked of his sufferings, and deplored his fate; Lilla, crossing her bosom, raised her blue eyes to Heaven, and when her head pressed the pillow, her pure soul put up a prayer for the wandering prisoner.

The trembling dawn of morning, breaking from the eastern hemisphere, and gradually dissipating the ebon reign of night,

was

was an object of sweet, but melancholy contemplation to the dejected Huberto: he traced the rising sun swelling into splendour; he saw its dazzling beams dissolve the misty vapours which hung upon the sides of the mountains, and reflect a thousand tints on the tremendous masses of rock which dotted the prospect. Sometimes the road was overhung by dark and immense precipices, whose huge projections, scattered with mosswort, heath, and wild-flowers, threatened annihilation to the passer-by; then again it swept through close-entwining thickets of oak, chesnut, and cypress; and then, towering in mid-air, its narrow pass, a rude bridge, tottered o'er mountain-torrents, thundering in the vale below.

The quick successive sensations, from awe to wonder, from wonder to admiration, which, languid as he was, often rose in broken exclamations of rapture to the lips of Di Rinaldini, awakened but the smile of

ridiculous in his guards, whose contracted hearts felt not the grateful energy of praise; breathed not the pure essence of thanksgiving to the Divine Architect. They were religious; because their souls were cramped by superstition, their minds hoodwinked by bigotry; but their religion extended not beyond the tenets of universal credence, beyond the casual mutter of an *ave Maria*: they knew not the genial philanthropy of pure, unvarnished faith; they knew not the spiritual organization of Christian meekness.

The party maintained a sullen silence save Anastagio, whose thoughts, still lingering on the supposed miraculous attestation of Huberto's innocence, had stationed himself at his side, and now and then whispered a kind of staggering doubt, and a reluctant acquiescence in his duty.

The heart of Di Rinaldini sickened when his

his ears first caught the vacant sound of merriment, the busy hum of population. To be led like a malefactor, to be branded as a murderer, to be exposed to the idle curiosity and unpitying remarks of the prejudiced, was gall, was wormwood to his feelings. He hung his head, not in shame, but in indignation; he stifled the rising gust of passion, not in fear, but in contempt. Irritated in mind, fatigued in body, he hailed even the walls of his prison as a haven of repose; nor shrunk when the massy gate closed upon him, when the heavy bolt groaned the death of liberty. Committed to the charge of beings as uncongenial, as ungentle, as his conductors across the Apennine, he followed through long and dreary passages, down steep and narrow stairs, whose dark and damp termination seemed the cleft entrance of the flinty tomb; there no sounds, save misery, were wont to breathe, for death and

"Solitude were ev'ry where!

Thro' all the gloomy ways and iron doors

That thither lead."

No murmur, no complaint escaped him; he tampered not with his conductors; he urged no bribe to extort compassion. Yielding to the untoward malice of his fate, he started not aghast from the black cold entrance of his dungeon, but, like a man wearied with length of suffering, looked boldly around, for

"Life had in it so little good or pleasing,

'Twas hardly worth his care."

Entombed within the flinty confines of a narrow cell, stretched upon a scanty pittance of scattered straw, his arms shackled with corroding irons, and his limbs trembling with enervating lassitude, Di Rinaldini mused on the varied incidents of his past life, from the earliest dawn of memory to the present hour of trial. His arrival at  
the

the Castle di Montranzo, his clandestine marriage with the Lady Adelheida, her sufferings, her death, the disappearance of the Conte Alverani, wrang from his eye the scalding tear of misery, extorted from his breast the bursting sigh of anguish; then, in quick succession, followed the introduction of the pilgrim; and then were his own woes lost in the sympathy of friendship.

Objects of pain, of pleasure, of apprehension, of dismay, alternately took possession of his soul; and banished the calm of indifference, the patience of endurance; yet it was not fear for his own safety that leadened the weight of slavery; neither did hope for his future enlargement brighten one ray of his prison's gloom—no; it was the interesting twins who claimed all his compassion, who occupied his every thought: it was Isidore, whom he loved, it was Hemelfride, whom he had never



seen—Isidore, whose virtues had claimed his gratitude, his reverence—Hemelfride, whose picture he had cherished, until the perfect image had wrought an unknown interest in his heart.



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## CHAP. VII.

I am fresh of spirit, and resolv'd  
To meet all peril very constantly.

The image of a wicked, heinous fault,  
Lives in his eye: that close aspect of his  
Does shadow the mood of a much troubled breast.

SHAKESPEARE.

Long was it ere the pilgrim recovered the powers of action: his faculties seemed numbed by the torpor of despair; all sense, all animation, for a time, had appeared suspended; and when, with an agonizing sigh, he raised his head from the supporting arm of Vannina, he saw not the object of his solicitude, the friend of his affection. The past

past flashed athwart his memory—Huberto was indeed gone—Huberto a prisoner, and arraigned for murder—Huberto torn from his home—Huberto threatened with an ignominious death. A shriek of wild horror escaped his burning lips.—“I will go!” he exclaimed, starting, and gazing frantically around the chamber—“I will follow him to Fossombrone—I will share his dungeon—I will share his fate. Yes, monsters! barbarians! think not to withhold me—I will go!” and pale, struggling, and subdued, he again sank on the shoulder of the weeping girl.

“Jesu Maria! how you rave, Isidore!” sobbed Vannina.—“I have lost a good friend, I have lost an excellent master; but I take not on so violently.”

“You—you—” interrupted the nearly distracted youth—“Father of Heaven! what is your loss to mine! I have lost the sun that cheered this world’s gloom! the dearest hope ’twixt earth and Heaven!—I have lost—”

“Is

"Is this the language of friendship?" demanded Father Brazilio, who unperceived had entered the apartment, and, approaching the pilgrim, bent on him an eye which seemed to dive into the very foundation of his sorrows.

"'Tis the language of gratitude and of nature," articulated Isidore.

"Nature, boy?"

"Yes, Nature, father," with recovered recollection; "for her dictates are not yet cramped by age, or subverted by asperity."

"In the approaching hour of trial," ironically remarked the monk, "firmness will be a prerequisite."

"The approaching hour of trial!" repeated the youth, an ashy paleness overspreading his features.

"The charges against the Signor are serious," continued Father Brazilio, steadily regarding him: "the long-hidden tale of murder must be confessed, or the  
most

most holy Inquisition will have recourse to the torture."

"The torture! merciful God!" shrieked the pilgrim—"Oh, father! father! what horrid phantom have you conjured up! Huberto racked—Huberto broken upon the wheel—Huberto—and for murder——"

He could not proceed; his breath became short and labouring; he sprung forward, he grasped the hand of the monk, he looked with an air of terror, supplication, and anxiety in his face: instantly he relinquished it, for the smile of malignant satisfaction, which pervaded the sallow features of Father Brazilio, pierced his heart with the wild thrill of horror.—"Eternal Providence!" he ejaculated, "is there no remedy for ills like his? must the fiendlike artifice of man prevail, and virtue sink his victim? Must worth, and excellence, and honour die, because malice decrees it? Oh, soften the sinful soul  
which

which planned the dire proceeding! turn to mild compassion the hidden foe of Di Rinaldini! Or if, for thy wise and secret purposes, villainy should reign triumphant, then conscience arise—rack him with thy eternal tortures—poison the salutary air he breathes—fill him with dire calamity and woe—let his nights, his days, be full of sorrow—let the curse of condemnation ring a death peal in his ear—let peace, nor hope, no, nor the apathy of madness, for a moment lighten his burning brain—let—”

“Boy,” interrupted the monk, “in an inquisitorial court, this ardour will lead to a discovery dangerous to the cause you so warmly plead; will betray the motive, and—”

“Betray!” eagerly exclaimed Isidore—“Father, it will betray no more than what to the whole world I would avow: it will betray my conviction of treachery, my gratitude for kindness, my adoration of virtue.”

“And

"And *no more?*" pointedly demanded Father Brazilio.

"Yes," answered the youth, "it will do more: it will betray, it will proclaim my disbelief of the foul, the villainous accusation; it will proclaim, what here I aver, my soul pictures not Heaven's own angel more guiltless of the charge than is the injured Di Rinaldini. Oh, if the weak efforts of my power should prevail!—oh, if I should save the precious life of my friend!"

"You!" with a supercilious sneer, observed the monk—"you! poor worm!"

"The insect sometimes stings the heel which crushes it," said Isidore, as Father Brazilio quitted the chamber; and, turning to the still weeping Vannina, added, "May I believe your long proffered offers of service? may I at once claim an exertion of your friendship, in demanding the assistance necessary to promote my enterprise?"

"Oh, Isidore! do you indeed doubt my friendship?"

friendship?" softly murmured Vannina—"Ungrateful youth! put it to the test; exert its utmost stretch; see what it will not do to prove it."

"Say not ungrateful, my good Vannina," rejoined the pilgrim, wiping the streaming tears from his cheek—"Heaven reads my heart, Heaven knows the tender sense I feel of every past obligation. But this is a new exertion, which calls for courage as well as secrecy; which calls for perseverance, as well as friendship."

"Name it, name it," quickly repeated Vannina—"In your cause, methinks I can be bold."

"In my cause, Vannina! and will you be less than bold in the cause of oppressed innocence, in the cause of your persecuted master?"

"The saints guard him!" articulated the distressed girl—"If I could serve——"

"You can, my good Vannina," eagerly interrupted the pilgrim; "you can serve both him and me. It is true the night is dark,



dark, it is true the tempest rattles; but the sounds proceed from the wind, and surely the wind cannot intimidate. Think with me, think every blast mourns the bleeding wrongs of the wanderer, and every blast will animate you to exertion."

"Alas! I cannot guess the point you aim at."

"This, then, is the point:—Will you, Vannina—nay, shrink not—will you obtain the key which unlocks the low portal opening from the ramparts of the Castle? will you, through that portal, give me liberty, and conceal all knowledge of my flight? 'Tis true, you cross the passage leading to the subterranean; but danger is ideal, danger—"

"Alas! I care not, I think not of myself," exclaimed Vannina, bursting into a fresh flood of sorrow; "but you, Isidore—Holy Virgin! in such a night as this, you to wander among the mountains! perhaps—"

"The Signor Huberto is now journeying over

over the mountains," mournfully articulated the youth.

"True; but not alone," she replied.

"Alas! what comfort can be drawn from his companions? Better if he were alone, than to be watched, to be surrounded by the unfeeling hirelings of power!"

"But he is safe," said Marinina.

"I too shall be safe," exclaimed Isidore.

"You!" fearfully shuddering—"oh no, no! The darkness of the night, the violence of the storm, the unfrequented passes of the Apennines, the haunts of condottieri, all; all proclaim the intention madness. If you go, you will either be murdered by banditti; or precipitated down some hard precipice."

"A wanderer, like myself, poor and destitute, need not fear the sword of the lawless prowler," said the pilgrim—"My habit is the habit of Christian charity; besides, my possessions can neither instigate avarice or tempt revenge; and for the fear of precipices, the God I serve will guide me through

through the darkness of the night, will turn my feet from danger and from death!"

"Alas! will you indeed brave the horrors of the tempest?" demanded Vannina—"Will you doom me the miserable suspense of uncertainty?—Oh!" snatching his hand, and looking imploring in his face, "stay but till the dawn pierces the misty vapours of darkness; and then, even though my heart break, I will give you liberty, and preserve your secret."

"Your heart, Vannina," fearfully repeated Isidore, who, in the faltering blushing accents of the maid, now, for the first time, traced more than pity—"your heart! merciful Heaven! Wretched, wretched girl! banish the infatuation, or you are lost."

The deathlike paleness which stole over the cheeks of Vannina recalled recollection. Her eyes were bent mournfully on the floor, and the hand which still held his trembled with uncontrollable emotion.

"Vannina," he continued, in accents of the deepest sorrow, "'tis your friendship, 'tis your compassion I would claim; but not your heart: guard it for one who can requite its ardour, who can repay with interest its dearest hopes, who can cherish its fondest bliss. For me," he paused, he pressed his hand upon his forehead, then eagerly resumed, "Waste not its sighs, its tender anxious wishes on one—alas, Vannina! on one who has no heart to offer.—Now let us go: the lapse of every moment upbraids me with ingratitude. Oh, if my rhetoric should prevail, I, even I, shall save Di Rinaldini! It is the hand of Providence which forms the design: wherefore am I thus tardy in its execution?"

Vannina took the lamp; she spoke not; but though she apparently struggled with her feelings, yet her eyes were full of tears, and her long and frequent sighs denoted the conflict passing within. Every superstitious fear was banished, every mysterious appearance

appearance forgotten : the pang of slighted love rankled at her heart, and the blush of virgin shame dyed her bosom. Yet, on reaching the portal, in the fearful moment of separation, nature and compassion conquered pride and struggling confusion.—“ You go, perhaps for ever,” she faltered.—“ Surely the prayer my soul offers up for your safety cannot offend. Isidore, it was your virtue and your piety which called forth my regard : the one will pity, the other extenuate my—my—”

Trembling, she paused, unable to proceed.

“ Offended, Vannina ! ” exclaimed the pilgrim—“ Holy Virgin ! how are my words perverted, my feelings misconstrued !—Offended ! no ; too sensitive, too confiding girl, at this moment, my heart bleeds at the declaration interest and compassion, have called forth—Offended ! Would that I could throw off the mystery, and point out the inefficacy

inefficacy of your love, and the danger of its influence! Heaven bless you, Vannina! In my wanderings, I shall remember the prayers of one innocent soul are put up for my safety. Heaven bless you, my gentle friend! Hereafter may you find, though dead to love, Isidore is alive to gratitude!" and, snatching the key from the agitated girl, he unfastened the portal, and, wrapping his cloak around him, rushed from Montranzo.

To follow the footsteps of the wanderer through the trackless wilds of that adventurous night, would exceed our limits, without unfolding the progress of our story;— suffice it to say, that, braving the warring elements, drenched with rain, and exhausted with fatigue, Isidore, for a few hours, found a shelter beneath the humble roof of industry.

In the morning, the face of nature wore

VOL. III. L a dif-

a different aspect: the blackened clouds had rolled away, and creation bore no stamp of desolation.—“Alas! how different the lot of man,” thought Isidore, as, pursuing his journey, his eyes wandered over the pendent dew-drops glittering in the sun-beams: “affliction comes, and his prospect closes; no reviving ray cheers his sadness, or smiles him into peace.—Pardon! oh pardon, Father, the ungrateful reflection!” continued the youth, raising his clasped hands to Heaven.—“Yes, a ray divine cometh, for hope ariseth in thy promises: the sorrows of a long, long life, by thee art softened, and the soul of true piety knoweth where to find a resting-place.”

Calmed and self-assured, he gazed on the enamelled plain before him; he inhaled the delicious perfume which the soft breeze wafted, and listened to the gurgling brook, whose pellucid waters, gliding through their  
moss-

moss-clad banks, refreshed the smiling face of nature, and moistened the parched bosom of vegetation.

Big with the project his sanguine mind had formed, his schemes of earthly bliss pointing to the enfranchisement of Huberto, quickly he passed on: quickly the scene changed, and all the stupendous grandeur of Apennine wilds diversified the prospect: mountains and torrents, rocks and forests, stretched in bold review before him; here almost impracticable passes yawned; there, trembling as though in mid-air, bridges, suspended over cataracts, tempted the hardy-footed hunter to pursue his game.

It was at the close of day, when the sun, serenely dropping beneath the horizon, cast its innumerable tints on the waving heads of the dark cypress, and thickly-studded groves of arbutus, lenticus, and juniper, that Isidore found himself in a



lonely valley, surrounded on every side by huge rocks and broken fissures. No sound, save the dismal roar of torrents, rolling down steeps, in defiance of every obstruction, and the shrill shriek of carnivorous fowl, hovering in search of prey, broke upon the gravelike stillness which prevailed.

The aspect was so dreary, that Isidore involuntarily shuddered as he cast his eyes around. Murder and rapine might here have stalked unmolested, for it was a spot suited to their darkest purpose. Thick and almost impenetrable pine forests clothed the swelling sides of the lofty mountains, while the overhanging rocks, dotted with pinasters, fir, and holly, formed a rough contrast to the thickets of cidratis, cystus, flowering-ash, arbutus, and camellias, which interspersed the valley.

With a light footstep, the pilgrim proceeded, starting at the fall of a leaf, magnifying

nifying suspicion into danger, and trembling, lest, from their rude haunts, the fierce brigands of plunder should rush out to stop his progress. But ere he had reached the extremity of the valley, exhausted with fatigue, his strength and spirits failed him; a faint sickness faded the roses on his cheek, and his knees tottered beneath their burden. Yielding to nature's weakness, he threw himself under the spreading branches of a palmeto, and for many minutes lost even the sense of apprehension. The breeze of evening, waving the dark curls of his glossy hair, and playing with renovating freshness o'er his features, restored suspended animation; and with it returned the eager wish, which, spurring him on to action, pointed to the still distant dungeon of Di Rinaldini.

Anxious to preserve the strength necessary for the prosecution of his exploit, he partook of the oaten cake and dried fruit, which the care of the hospitable cottager

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had

had provided ; and having quenched his thirst at an adjacent brook, again threw himself on the grass, and imperceptibly sunk into slumber. But short were his moments of repose ; for a gentle hand upon his shoulder dissipated the airy visions of fancy.

He looked up, and beheld at his side a venerable man, whose dress denoted him to be of some religious persuasion.—“ I would screen you from the dews of night, my son,” said the hermit.—“ Accompany me to yon cell,” pointing to a hollow excavation in the rock, “ and there you may rest in peace.”

“ Alas ! father, it is not for me to rest,” replied Isidore : “ even now I have lost time, for when sleep stole like a thief upon my senses, the clouds were still dappled with the golden radiance of the sun ; and now, behold, the moon is arisen, and her chaste light impartial spreads over these wilds an universal ray. I dare not tarry longer,

longer, for it is the voice of duty, of gratitude, of humanity, which calls me hence."

"To-morrow, too adventurous youth, even when the first ray of morning trembles in the eastern hemisphere, you shall proceed," rejoined the recluse; "but to-night, *duty* and *humanity*, strong as your own calling, bid me detain you in my cell, for even now you totter, and your exhausted form, but little suited to brave the night's cold damps, pleads for quiet and repose."

"Oh, holy father! you know not what you do," said the pilgrim—"It is to save a life I fly, to snatch an innocent, persecuted being from——"

"It is to preserve a life I bid you tarry," interrupted the hermit, following the quick step of the youth, to whom momentary enthusiasm had given momentary strength.

"Ah!" pausing with returning faintness, and clinging to his staff, "what is my life, compared with——"

"Your life, boy!" said the anchorite, in accents of severity—"If this pilgrim's

garb guises not an unhallowed cause, say wherefore this mystery? wherefore this precipitancy?"

A transient glow flushed the pale cheek of Isidore: his lips reproachfully murmured "*unhallowed!*" as, raising his dark eyes to Heaven, he seemed there to appeal for the rectitude of his intentions.

The hermit's heart smote him for the suspicion; he read in the wounded pride of the youth the consciousness of innocence; and, breathing a heavy sigh, he took his arm, and supported him, incapable of further resistance, up the steep and winding path which led to his dwelling.

With involuntary horror Isidore paused at the entrance of the cell: its wild and desolate aspect filled him with unknown dread—it seemed, as an eagle's nest upon the rough point of an overhanging steep, to defy approach, and threaten destruction.

Steriel

Sterile and drear, the rock bore not the stamp of beauty; its hard and flinty bosom, save a few scattered tufts of sun-scorched moss, could boast no vegetation. No pellucid stream trickled from its sides—no, nor vagrant tree, nor balmy flower, bent to the sighing breeze of evening; it looked as a spot blotted, as it were, from creation, it looked as a spot rejected by man, forgotten by God.

“Father,” said Isidore, as his eyes, turning from the barren site of the hermitage, fixed on the adjacent contrast of variegated beauty and picturesque scenery, “wherefore, rejecting the inviting blessings which in this valley abundant Heaven holds forth to your acceptance, have you fixed your retirement in a solitude so forlorn—a solitude, which looks as though your soul pictures the road to mercy as lying through the path, not of self-denial, but of affliction.”

“The road to mercy!” muttered the re-  
luse,

cluse, shrinking with a palsied start from the arm of the pilgrim—"the road to mercy! No; Heaven has barred the road to mercy; and sin has called down the interdiction."

"'Tis Heaven which has opened the road to mercy through the expiation of repentance," mildly observed Isidore; and, for the first time, casting an eye of observation on the countenance of his companion, he beheld, not the calm humility of pious resignation, but sallow-visaged remorse, and hollow-eyed despair.

The anchorite replied not; he led into the cell, carefully reclosed the door, lighted a lamp from the dying embers on the hearth, and pointed to a huge stone to rest upon.

In silent scrutiny, the youth surveyed the apartment. It was long and narrow, hollowed by the chisel of Nature, and decorated with rude carved crucifixes, and

and mouldering relics. At the further extremity was scattered a couch of dried leaves; a human skull; an emblem of mortality, lay with other bones upon a rocky table; while, over the dim panoply of horror, the sickly lamp shed a yellow radiance.

“Your timid heart shrinks from a scene so desolate,” said the hermit, reading the expressive features of his guest—“Poor youth! rocked in the cradle of indulgence, well may your cheek turn pale, and your courage falter. Once——”

“’Tis not for myself,” interrupted Isidore; “no, father, ’tis for the self-doomed inhabitant of such a dwelling I shudder.”

“Once,” pursued the recluse, with a mixture of wildness and despair, “once such a display of horror, such a discipline of remorse, would have alike subdued me, would have turned my brain to madness; but now the self-evidence of guilt convicts



me, and adjudges the expiation. But if you are dismayed, if you would shut out the scene, there is my bed of leaves; stretch yourself on it, boy; sleep, and I will defend you—not as a pure guardian, but as a suspicious watchman, whom sin has made wily.”

“ Ere the morning’s dawn I would awaken,” said the youth; “ I would start before day’s harbinger, the lark, carols her matin hymn. Even now my laggish strength rallies, and, but for your hospitable detention, I would away and try its ardour. It is the flesh that is weak, not the spirit, father; the flesh shrinks from the office the spirit spurs on to perform.”

“ What is that office, my son ? ” demanded the anchorite—“ what is that imperious call of duty which bids defiance to danger, and leads you, a lone and solitary wanderer, into wilds like these ? ”

“ It is a sad story, father,” replied Isidore, wiping from his cheek an intrusive tear.

"A sad story!" repeated the recluse, "and you the hero! Poor boy, so young, yet conversant in woe!"

"Alas!" sobbed the pilgrim, "but for the hero of that story, I had not been here to tell it. He saved me from death, he rescued me from misery; and now is he dragged defenceless from his home, arraigned of crimes the malice of infernals could alone invent."

"But a groundless accusation," observed his attentive auditor, "is easy to circumvent. The consciousness of innocence is a shield against a host of foes—a shield," shuddering, "which the guilty soul dearly—oh how dearly covets!"

"True; but the consciousness of innocence will not turn aside the scorpion-sting of revenge, neither will it subvert the malice of invention. An accusing spirit, is said to convict a guileless man.—God of Heaven, would the dead arise to damn the innocent? No, no; it is treachery all."

"What

"What is the offence?" inquired the hermit.

"Murder!" replied Isidore.

The recluse dropped upon his knees.—  
"Murder!" he wildly shrieked, burying his face in his hands—"Oh, deathful sound!"  
—But, recovering himself, and casting his dark and hollow eyes around the cell, added,  
"It is a heinous offence, my son! What may be the grounds of conviction?"

"No blood was spilled," pursued Isidore;  
"but——"

The hermit gasped for breath.—"Go on, go on," he implored.

"Poison is said to have done the deed," concluded the youth.

A deathlike palsy seemed to shake the limbs of the recluse; cold fearful drops hung upon his forehead; his eyes, as though starting from their sockets, were fixed on the pilgrim, as, in the hollow broken voice of agony, he repeated, "*poison!*"

"Father,

"Father, you feel too sensibly the woes of others," said Isidore, flying to offer consolation.

"She died, as an angel, blessing and forgiving," exclaimed the anchorite, regardless of the attempt.

"And Di Rinaldini," concluded Isidore, scarcely sensible of what he was saying, "the sorrowing, deploring husband of the ill-fated Adelheida, in a lone dungeon at Fossombrone, awaits his trial for the crime."

Loudly he shrieked, for at his feet, cold, pale, and lifeless, he beheld extended the wretched master of the dwelling. No lagging pulse trembled around his heart; no vital warmth suppld his stiffened limbs. Half frantic with terror, Isidore loosened the rope which girded his habit, and, with persevering exertion, chaffed his emaciated hands, and sprinkled his wan cheeks with the pure beverage left at his evening's repast. Long was it ere the suspended  
faculties

faculties of animation returned, long was it ere success crowned the efforts of humanity; for not till hope began to sicken in the heart of the pilgrim, did a feeble groan denote that life still lingered.

“Di Rinaldini!” burst from the livid lips of the recluse, as, with momentary strength, he dashed the pitcher from the hand of Isidore, and, raising himself upon his elbow, fixed his eyes upon him.—“Boy, why have you awakened me to existence? Know you not the curse of God is gone out against me?—know you not that, like Cain, I am doomed an alien to mercy and to peace?”

“Alas! why do you look so wild?” fearfully interrogated the youth—“Why do you so impiously limit the beneficence of that Being, who unheeded, suffereth not a sparrow to fall to the ground?”

“No, no,” said the hermit, deeply absorbed by his own reflection, while frenzy, horror, despair, alternately flashed over his features

features—"no, no, he dares not do so black a deed."

"Dares not!" repeated Isidore—"Ah me! he could not."

"And yet he has."

"Father!"

"Yes, he has damned himself and me."

"Di Rinaldini?"

"I tell you, hell is not more false than is the accusation. Question me no further," springing from his recumbent posture, and tottering towards the door—"It is true, blood registered not the deed; but conscience——"

His voice was smothered in a heavy sob, and, rushing from the cell, he left his guest a prey to suspense and apprehension.

"Surely," thought Isidore, as he reposed his wearied limbs on the hard bed of the hermit, "surely the wrongs of Adelheida, the sufferings of Di Rinaldini, are no strangers to my unhappy host; or why did the  
the

the bare mention of incidents, which this solitude, methinks, must have excluded, paralyze the functions of animation, and turn his brain to madness? Could the effect of indisposition be so instantaneous? or might it not have arisen from a strange coincidence of circumstances, which, by recalling the trials of early life, set in review before him the event which poisoned the sweet intercourse of society, which gangrened the energies of the soul?—But the names—” pausing.—“Wherefore, too, did he start aghast at the word ‘poison?’ wherefore did he say the curse of God was gone out against him? Surely——Pardon me, Heaven!” And all again closed in wild chaos.

The moon was veiled in clouds; the stars no longer twinkled; night waned in dull uniformity; the lamp flashed faintly in the socket; the cricket chirped upon the hearth;—but still the hermit returned not. Sleep stole upon the senses of the youth, and, even  
when

when the pure spirit of hallowed aspiration trembled on his lips, asserted her imperious prerogative.

Calm was his slumber, for innocent was his soul; he heard not the lifting of the latch, he heard not the entrance of the recluse, he heard not the sighs which swelled his bosom, as kneeling he bent over him; neither did he feel the scalding tears which fell upon his cheek.

“I would pray,” murmured the penitent; “but sin has blistered my lips, and corroded my heart: I would pray, but my soul dares not lift itself to Heaven. And yet one mode of expiation remains.—Poor youth, do you think to save Di Rinaldini? Once my slumbers were as light.—Hah! he smiles! Some beatific vision floats upon his brain; perhaps ’tis the tempter sin, perhaps ’tis a snare to undo him. Shield him, God of Omnipotence! shield him in the path of rectitude! I may pray for others,



others, though I dare not pray for myself. Gird him with pious strength to resist temptation! nerve his young mind against the fallacious pleasures of the world! Let not avarice, let not ambition poison the spring of action! Oh teach him to dread the first fatal lapse of duty! teach him that virtue is the road to honour, that content is the foundation of felicity!"

The grey mists of morning hung in densed vapours upon the hills, when Isidore awoke. The hermit was still kneeling at his side; but his features no longer bore the alarming wildness of distraction, neither did his eyes glare incongruous horror: he looked as one subdued, broken down—as one in whom despair had sapped the springs of life, as one upon whom affliction had stamped the iron sway of its power. His cheeks were colourless, his eyes dim, and his respiration laboured.

"I have monopolized your bed, father,"  
said

said the pilgrim, rising.—“Methinks luxury’s boasted down could not have courted a slumber more salutary. Alas! for your hospitality, I have but my gratitude to offer; yet still would I encroach on your kindness, by inquiring my road to Fossombrone?”

“You must first partake of my humble fare,” replied the hermit: “true, ’tis, as my dwelling, homely; but nature lacks not delicacies—and then I will accompany you through the valley, and direct you on your road.”

The frugal store of the anchorite was then produced, and Isidore, with a thankful heart, rose from the board, and claimed the promised guidance of his host. But alas! strength coped not with inclination: with difficulty, the hermit reached the foot of the rock; the night’s long watching, and the agitation his mind had endured, had produced a general languor, which defied all attempts at exertion. In silence  
he

he pressed the hand of the youth as he bade him adieu ; and when Isidore supplicated his blessing and his prayers for the success of his enterprise, his eyes filled with tears, he attempted in vain to articulate, he pointed upwards, and turned hastily away.

Aided by the light tissue of imagination, every darkened shade of sorrow vanished, and Isidore, journeying on, yielded to the reins " of fancy, tranc'd in bliss."—Huberto was no longer a captive mourner ; the whole scheme of treachery was developed ; his enemies were discomfited ; his shackles were thrown off ; he was restored to freedom, restored to his home. The beneficence of his heart was no longer restrained ; the blessings of the poor, the prayers of the prosperous, ascended in one pure flame to Heaven.

The yellow radiance of day, long gradually advancing, now, in full splendour,  
burst

burst through the dark and misty clouds, and gilded the whole face of creation with universal glory. Soft were the notes of melody which issued from the close entwined thickets of mulberry, jubub, cork, senna, carob, and cedar trees, and grateful to a feeling heart the praise-offering of nature! Isidore, exalted, harmonized, with hasty footsteps brushed the light dew from the grass. Long since had he ascended the mountainous height which bounded the valley; but though a long level tract appeared before him, yet no scattered hamlet smiled the emblem of rude industry, no friendly cabaret courted the wearied traveller to repose. The blue harebell, the sweet violet, the spiral orchis, bending with the "balmy tear" of morning, mingled their freshness with the passing gale; while the soft-downed cystus and fragrant myrtle, alike born to bloom unseen, wasted their "sweetness on the desert air."

Long and toilsome was the journey; yet  
the

the firm mind of the pilgrim shrunk not; duty and gratitude pointed to the goal, and fortitude and courage spurred on to the attainment.

The evening was again closing, when, faint, weary, and exhausted, he found himself near Fossombrone. The appearance of the town filled him not with joy; his spirits drooped in melancholy despondency—Alas! it contained no home for him, no friend to welcome his arrival, to listen to the tale of his endurance. A poor, forlorn, destitute stranger, unknowing and unknown, the enthusiastic prosecutor of a romantic calling, for the first time he felt, he shuddered at the difficulties which threatened disappointment to his hopes, which threatened an overthrow to all his sanguine pictures, which guarded the entrance of Huberto's dungeon.

Raising his tearful eyes to Heaven, he seated himself on a rustic bench at the door  
of

of a cottage, his heart sinking in foreboding sadness, and his whole soul absorbed in the misfortunes of DI Rinaldini. He perceived not that his appearance had attracted the observation of its inmates; nor, until he was addressed in the softest accents of compassion, was he sensible of the approach of an elderly woman, whose clean and homely garb bespoke industry and content.—“You seem as though you had journeyed far,” she said—“Come into my cottage, poor youth, and rest yourself, in welcome!”

Kindness, and from a stranger, in a situation so forlorn, vibrated on the sensitive feelings of Isidore; his full heart forbade articulation. In the warm impulse of gratitude, he snatched her hand, and burst into tears.

“You are wearied,” pursued his humane inviter, leading him into the cottage: “your form is but little suited to endure  
VOL. III. M fatigue.

fatigue. I am a mother, and nature urges me to show to the destitute that compassion I would crave for my own children."

"Alas! I then indeed have a claim," sobbed Isidore—"no home, no lodging, have I to shelter my head from the night's cold damps."

"Yes, here you shall have a lodging," replied the dame; "here you shall tarry, until your health, your strength, and your spirits, are alike recruited."

"Heaven bless you, good mother! Heaven repay the charity!" articulated the youth. And then he smiled on the eager handmaid of Hospitality, who, in the person of the dame's blooming daughter, spread the table with the cottage fare.

"That's right, Jacquenetta; bestir thee, girl," said the old woman—"Take the hat and staff from the poor wearied stranger. It does me good to see thee!"

"How lucky," exclaimed Jacquenetta, "that Canziano left us yesterday! The pilgrim, you know, can have his bed."

"Do

"Do you think it lucky?" archly demanded the dame.

"Fie, mother!" faltered the cottage girl, while a vivid blush betrayed the lurking secret of her heart—"if Canziano was here, how could we lodge the stranger?"

"O! we could have sent Canziano to the state prison. It is not Biagio's turn to watch to-night. He would have given him half his bed. Besides, with inclination in the heart, there is always invention in the head."

"The state prison!" eagerly exclaimed Isidore—"know you ought of the state prison?—Who is Biagio?"

"Biagio is my brother," said Jacquetta, "and one of the inquisitorial guard."

The pilgrim, starting from his seat, grasped the hand of the cottager.—"Your brother!" he ejaculated—"God of Heaven, I thank thee!"

Instantly amazement and alarm pervaded



the features of the mother and daughter. With suspicious curiosity they eyed the speaking countenance of their guest, irradiated with the pure smile of delight, with the seraphic glow of gratitude.

Recovering his recollection, Isidore beheld the surprise his unguarded warmth had created.—“Alas!” he thought, “ever am I the child of impulse, the creature of momentary ardour. How, but in trusting to the humanity and honour of these worthy people, can I appease their suspicions?—You are a mother, you are a sister,” he exclaimed, taking a hand of each, and looking imploringly in their faces. “By the soft emotions those tender, those endearing names awaken, I beseech your secrecy and your aid.—I was an orphan, without one social tie, one kindred claim, save humanity:—in the breast of a stranger that claim was awakened. He rescued me from death, he hid me in the shelter of his bosom’s friendship, he gave me hope, he gave me comfort,

fort, he gave me happiness. Through him have the scenes of life smiled, through him—Father of Heaven! and now the victim of fraud, of villainy, he is dragged to Fossombrone, he is buried in an inquisitorial dungeon. It is to behold him once more, it is to bid a last sad adieu to the friend of my soul, that alone, unguarded, miserable, I have endured the pelting storm, the night's dark horrors—I have trod the almost trackless passes of the Apennines.—Ah! I see I have touched your hearts, I see I have interested you in my cause, I see I have awakened pity.”

“Poor youth!” sobbed the sympathizing Jacquenetta.—“But how can we serve you?”

“Your brother is an inquisitorial guard.”

“True,” observed the dame; “But Biagio has no power.”

“If he has humanity,” eagerly rejoined Bidore, “surely he can lead me to the

"Signor; surely, for one little hour, he can response the name of mercy. It is a short lapse in your life, good mother! Think it is your son who pleads, and then you will—you must yield me your interest."

"Bisagio, the Virgin bless him! has an excellent heart," said the dame.—"But see, yonder he comes. Many and oft times has he ached, poor fellow, at the sufferings of others!"

Isacquetta flew to the door, and, in a few moments, returned, followed by a young man, whose dress spoke his situation.

"A Boy," said the dame, as she stroked his cheek, and looked with maternal tenderness in his face, "this poor youth has journeyed over the Apennines without a guide, merely to see a friend in distress. —It is a pity he should fail in his errand."

"We

"We gave him a lodging, because he was a wanderer," said Jacquenetta, throwing her arms across the shoulder of her brother—"We gave rest to his body—you, Biagio, can give comfort to his mind."

"Me!" repeated the astonished youth, looking towards Isidore for an explanation.

Thus called upon, the pilgrim recapitulated the gratitude he owed for the services and affection of Di Rinaldini, and ended by earnestly imploring Biagio to suffer him to visit the prisoner.

"Most willingly would I serve you," he replied; "but it is a step I dare not take. The Signor Huberto di Rinaldini is indicted upon charges too serious to admit of the possibility."

"Charges!" repeated the trembling Isidore.

"Yes, charges," resumed Biagio.—"The first is murder; the second little less heinous—spitting away from the convent of  
Corpus

Corpus Domini a novice, on the eve of profession."

"Merciful God!" shrieked the pilgrim, as the ashy hue of death overspread his features—"Huberto arraigned for the flight of Hemelfride!—"Tis false! 'tis a vile, 'tis an infernal calumny! I—I—I can confound the accuser—I can exonerate him of the crime."

"You!" burst from the lips of each of his hearers.

"Yes, I," gasping for breath, and clinging to the back of his chair—"Huberto knows not Hemelfride, knows not the mystery of her retreat, knows not the scene of her sorrows.—Oh!" snatching the hand of Biagio, and dropping on his knees—"oh if your heart ere felt another's woe, if your soul would crave of Heaven the mercy I now supplicate, turn not away from my prayers. Think 'tis peace, 'tis life hangs upon your decision; think a wretched, wretched being's last hope, last petition, is offered up."

' Would

"Would I could serve you!" murmured the young man, raising him from his suppliant posture, and dashing a truant tear from his eye.

"You can," exclaimed the nearly frantic Isidore.—"Let me steal to the miserable dungeon of my friend—I care not when—I care not how. In the dead of night, when suspicion slumbers, let me once more hear his voice, let me once more see his face, and, to the last lingering moment of my existence, I will think of your humanity, I will pray for your prosperity."

"What can be done?" said the dame—  
"Biagio, is it indeed impossible?"

The young man paused for a moment, then, suddenly starting, "Yes, I will run the risk," he exclaimed—"To-morrow night is my tour of duty; to-morrow night, my station will be at the entrance of the passage leading to the Signor's dungeon. In the disguise of a Dominican confessor—remember, you must submit to artifice—station yourself beneath the outer walls of  
the







